



Journal of Arts & Humanities

Volume 09, Issue 01, 2020: 91-103

Article Received: 01-12-2019

Accepted: 21-12-2019

Available Online: 28-01-2020

ISSN: 2167-9045 (Print), 2167-9053 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18533/journal.v9i1.1800>

Language Use in Selected Nigerian Newspaper Headlines

Robert, Esther¹

ABSTRACT

Language plays an essential role of communicating meaning, socio-cultural and ideological transmission. Oral or written language can be put to multiple uses as in the case of language use in the construction of newspaper headlines in the Nigerian context. This paper seeks to establish the unique role of the language of newspaper headlines as a vehicle of conveying meaning, expressing human ideologies and maintaining social solidarity. A sample of fourteen (14) headline reports on anti-corruption is purposively selected from The Nation and The Punch newspapers of 2016. The headlines are analyzed based on M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). The functional components of ideational, interpersonal and textual levels of the model were identified; however, only the ideational strand of the model was adopted in the analysis of data. The research reveals that national representations, role allocation to participants by activation/ passivation, overlapping of process categories and verbalization of processes are some of the means writers represent their ideology of a given situation and events. The research also shows data categorization into material, verbalization and mental processes. The paper submits that the dominant process type, material processes, therefore, is an important tool that writers use in communicating their messages and ideologies through words and texts to the masses.

Keywords: Material process, verbalization, transitivity, language, ideology.

This is an open access article under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.

1. Introduction

Language is a vehicle for conveying meaning, expressing human actions, thoughts and maintaining human social relations. It is used in communication and construing individual, group experience and world view. The prime function of language is communication or interaction which can be in oral or written form. Thus, as human being's supreme tool of communication, in line with Robert and Umoekeh's (2019) view, "language remains a powerful vehicle of socio-cultural, political, ideological and aesthetic transmission" (p.56). This essential role of language as a vehicle of ideological transmission is revealed in the language being deployed in the construction of newspaper headlines. However, in what ways do writers deploy language to represent their ideologies of a given situation or

¹Department of English, University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. E-Mail: estherobert2@yahoo.com

event in newspaper headlines? What process types, with respect to transitivity, are utilized by the writers of news headlines in communicating their messages and ideologies to the masses? The researcher was bothered by these issues and this paper aims at answering these questions.

Language is ideologically biased. Spoken or written words are never neutral, rather they carry the ideology and power that reflects the biases and interests of those who speak or write them (Taiwo, 2007, Fiske, 1994). In other words, through ideology, one is enabled to recognize people's prejudices and biases. Moreover, Taiwo further argues that language can never appear by itself – it always appears as the representative of a system of linguistic terms, which themselves capture the prevailing discursive and ideological systems.

Ideology, as a concept, is used in many disciplines and defined differently. In this paper, the term is defined within the context of its relevance to language use. Ideally, ideology entails all the difficulties that might be linked with the cultural complexity of language. It is seen as a set of beliefs, doctrines or values which might be political, religious, linguistic, cultural or economic which shape the perception of an individual or a group. From a sociocognitive perspective, Van Dijk (2006) sees ideology as a system of ideas or as "shared representations of social groups" as well as the "axiomatic principles of such representations" (p.115). In that case, ideology forms the basis of a social group's self-image which in-turns shapes the group's identity, aims and values in relation to other social groups. Two features of ideology are rich history and contradictory meanings. Hence, Kress (1985) posits that ideology constitutes one of the less settled classifications of socio-cum-philosophical discourses on meanings, ranging from the relatively simple system of ideas or worldview to the more complex ones such as Marx's ideology of 'false consciousness'.

To Eagleton (1991), an ideology involves the manners of thinking and behaving in a given society which make the norms of that society appear natural or unquestioned to its members. Thus, Eagleton believes that not all ideas qualify as ideologies, because if that was the case, then ideology, as a critical tool, would have had little to offer. Ideology must first be seen as a coherent and recognizable construct.

Language plays an indispensable role in ideological construction. It is that element that ties one's knowledge of the world with social practices. Put it other way, an analysis of language is basic to the study of ideology. This principle informs Hodge, Kress and Jones's (1979) emphasis on the importance of language for the study of ideology:

Ideologies are sets of ideas involved in the ordering of experience, making sense of the world. This order and sense is partial and particular. The systems of ideas which constitute ideologies are expressed through language. Language supplies the models and categories of thought, and in part people's experience of the world is through language (p.81).

Here, language is presented as the vehicle through which peoples' experiences and knowledge of the world are portrayed. In this paper, the analysis of the language employed in newspaper headlines becomes imperative in the proper understanding of the ideology conveyed by the writers of these headlines under study.

Newspaper writing is a genre which operates with a clear objective of effecting desired changes in the perception and interpretation of events by the readers. The power used in this genre is intentional and symbolic. There is a relationship between power and language. As a concept, power is mostly used to analyse human attributes such as communicative behaviour. Power is conceived as a capacity some persons, groups or institutions have to influence the behaviour of others for some goals and intended effects. Elucidating on this intrinsic relationship between language, ideology and power, Kress (1985, p.25) observes:

For any theory of language that is serious about its social functions and effects, the consideration of the categories, ideology and power are inseparable. Such a language theory has to be accepted, as it has to focus quite deliberately on the relations of language to the material conditions of its uses and of its users.

News reports in newspapers are ideologically biased. Olowe's (1993, p. 8) submission substantiates this position thus:

The editors and his reporters on the hand and their audience constitute an ideological empire. The newspaper subjects all newsworthy events that constantly come up in social life to rigorous linguistic manipulation to make them suit the ideological expectation of the audience.

From Olowe's standpoint, news writers and their audience belong to one ideological camp or the other. Besides, news reports in the form of headlines, cartoons, feature articles or editorials, etc, are regularly subjected to linguistic manipulations aiming at meeting the needs and yearnings of the society in which they live.

Newspaper headlines, also known as caption, serve as forerunners to news reports, revealing the social, cultural and national representations circulating in a society at a given time (Taiwo, 2007). They are well crafted news summary with the intent to attract the attention of the readers. The headlines are intentionally structured to speak the mind of the presenter or publisher. Accordingly, Tabe and Fieze (2018) believe that the shape and structure of the headline mirror the content, which is both "politically oriented and ideologically driven"(p.65). Van Dijk(1998) cited in Tabe and Fieze (2018) states that newspaper headlines play three significant roles: First, they provide a brief summary of the main news to the reader; hence, readers do not have to read the whole story to get the point. Second, they attract attention. Third, they provide an initial indicator of the content and style of the news values of the newspaper. The stated functions, perhaps, explain the common practice whereby many a Nigerian observably would listen to or view a review of newspaper headlines on the radio or television. Besides, vendors strategically display their newspaper headlines at different corners on the streets for passers-by to have a glance at. By having a glimpse of the headlines, they appear to have had the gist of the current news, information and ideology conveyed on the papers.

The nexus of language and ideology in newspaper headlines has been investigated by many researchers from diverse perspectives. Yet, some gaps still need be filled in the literature; hence, the importance and justification for this paper. For instance, Tabe and Fieze (2018) explore private and public newspaper headlines on the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon from a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective. They discover the use of vocabulary that shows imposition, tension and dialogue, in addition to the use of rhetorical questions. In their submission, it is found out that newspaper publishers exercise power through language to influence the thoughts and opinions of Cameroonians on the Anglophone crisis.

In addition, with a focus on editorials, Olowe (1993) examines the interconnection of language and ideology in Nigerian newspapers, using CDA as his analytical framework. He identifies the linguistic devices used by these newspapers in projecting their ideologies to include: thematization, passivisation and nominalization.

On the other hand, Taiwo(2007), investigates language use and ideology in the headlines of six Nigerian newspaper(The Sun, Nigerian Tribune, This day, and The Guardian, Tell and Newswatch). Using CDA as his framework, he uncovers basically two categories of headlines: themes and surface structures.

The current paper differs from the previous research in that while these works adopt Critical Discourse Analysis as their theoretical basis, it deploys Systemic Functional Grammar to uncover the social functions embedded in the categories of ideology and power which are encoded in the headlines of The Nation and Punch Newspapers. Besides, whereas Tabe and Fieze's research area is the Cameroon, the present study is centered in Nigeria. Thus, the paper has contributed to the literature through its fresh perspective and findings, thereby widening the scope of the studies in the area under investigation.

The paper is divided into seven sections with one serving as introduction, two as methodology and three as theoretical basis. Sections four, five, six and seven respectively present the Literature review, the results, discussion of findings and conclusion.

2. Methodology

A sample of fourteen (14) headline reports on anti-corruption in Nigeria is purposively selected from The Nation and The Punch newspapers of 2016. The headlines are qualitatively analyzed based on M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). The functional components of ideational, interpersonal and textual levels of the model were identified; however, only the ideational strand of the model was adopted in the analysis of data. The results of the findings are presented in a table for convenience.

3. Theoretical framework

The paper adopts M. A. K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as its theoretical fulcrum for the analysis of the data. The theory applies a social semiotic approach to language known as systemic functional linguistics. By 'systemic', Halliday sees language as a network of systems for making meaning and each depends on the context or environment. On the other hand, "functional" refers to Halliday's view that language is as it is because of what it is employed to do. As Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) explain, the multidimensional architecture of language mirrors the multidimensional nature of human experience as well as interpersonal relations. Meanwhile, Systemic functional grammar appears to be closely linked with sociology in that it investigates how language is used in social contexts to achieve particular goals (Halliday, 2004). Language, posit Ufot and Thomas (2016), is a social semiotics whose contextual components such as situations and culture are indispensable to the proper analysis of that language.

Accordingly, the grammatical system plays a unique role in the construction of meanings. This informs Halliday's claim that language is meta-functionally organized. He further argues that the primary function of language is meaning in social life and for this reason all languages have three kinds of semantic components. Besides, all languages have facilities for construing experience (the ideational component), facilities for enacting human's social relations (interpersonal component) and facilities for bringing both kinds of meaning together in coherent texts (the textual function). Each of the grammatical systems proposed by Halliday is related to these meta-functions (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014).

According to Halliday (1978, p.64), "ideational, interpersonal and textual meta-functions are three useful abstractions that link variations of language to variations of social context". This study adopts Halliday's tripartite abstractions termed "meta-functions" to show how language is used as a vehicle for conveying meaning and expressing human actions/relations in the headlines of *The Punch* and *The Nation* Newspapers. On the use of the term "meta-functions" instead of "functions", Halliday and Hasan (1985) explain:

We could have called them simply "function". However, there is a long tradition of talking about the functions of language in context where function simply means purpose or way of using language and has no significance for the analysis of language itself. But, system analysis shows that functionality is intrinsic to language, this implies that, the entire Architecture of Language is arranged along functional lines. Language is as it is because of the functions in which it has evolved in the human species. The term "meta-function" was adopted to suggest that function was an integral component within the overall theory (Halliday's and Hasan, 1985), cited in Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p.31).

As Halliday (cited in Ezeifeika, 2016, p.240) observes, these 'meaning potentials' which language conveys simultaneously in the grammar of the clause is referred to as "meta-functions". He calls these meta-functions, 'the formalized meaning potential of language or the functional components of the grammar'. These include: the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual meta-functions.

Ideational component of discourse is a clausal representation of the natural world in the broadest sense. The textual examination of the ideational meaning is an attempt to explore the intention of language to fulfill the function of organizing, understanding and expressing our perceptions, beliefs, ideologies of the world and our consciousness (Halliday, 1978, p.112). Going further, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) observe that language provides a theory of human experience and certain resources of the lexico-grammar of every language are dedicated to that function and this is called the ideational meta-function. This experience involves the processes within and outside the phenomena of the external world as well as those of perceptions and the logical relations deduce-able from them.

Therefore, a text is analysed for its portrayal of reality, participants and the information in the clauses and sentences. It is sub-divided into experiential (the processes); the participants; circumstances and then logical (the organizing relations expressed, for instance, by dependencies) and taxis (parataxis or hypotaxis) (Ufot and Thomas, 2016).

Language, according to White (2000), represents external reality by happenings and states, referred to as processes (verbal group); entities known as participants (normal group); and circumstances in which the happenings and states occur, referred to as circumstances (adverbial and

prepositional phrases). The three transitivity categories are inherently overlapping and indicate an evaluative stance of the writer; hence, the focus of the paper.

Transitivity entails the transmission of ideas. It denotes the ideational function of language by the expression of processes. As Halliday notes, our most effective perception of reality consists of doing, happening and feeling which are sorted out in the grammar of the clause and which constitutes our construction of the worldview (Halliday, 1978). Transitivity therefore is concerned with the process type and participants encoded at clause level. It denotes what is known in other theories as semantic relations...and together with the systems for circumstantial (adjunct), for verb tense, for noun type (common noun versus proper noun), for types of prepositional group (location in time and space). It describes the experiential part of the ideational meta-function (Ufot and Thomas, 2016).

Transitivity, as Simpson (2007) explains, refers to the manner meanings are encoded in the clause and to the manner various types of processes are depicted in language. Transitivity in Systemic Grammar is portrayed in a broader sense than in traditional grammar in which it merely indicates verbs which take direct objects.

Transitivity involves three key components of processes. First is the process itself, which is realized in grammar by the verb phrase. Second is the participant(s) associated with the process, realized by noun phrases. Third element is typically expressed by prepositional and adverbial phrases which fill up the adjunct element in clause structure. Transitivity, therefore, is part of a wider semantic arrangement of relations comprising processes (the verb phrase), participant roles (non-phrase) and circumstance (adverbial/prepositional phrase). Simpson (2007) identifies six types of processes classified by grammatical as well as semantic criteria into:

i. Material Processes (doing): kicks, swim, break, etc.

Participant role: actor and goal, e.g.

Actor: Peter

Process: kicks

Goal: the ball

ii. Mental Processes (sensing): sense, fear, love, likes, etc.

Participant roles: sensor and phenomenon e.g. Alice senses the error.

Sensor: Alice

Process: senses

Phenomenon: the error

iii. Relational Processes (being): stands, for, has, is, etc.

Participant roles: identified and identifies/carrier and attribute e.g. Soyinka is Africa's best playwright. His plays are very witty.

Identified: Soyinka

Process: is

Identifier: Africa's best playwright

Carrier: His plays

Process: are

Attribute: very witty

iv. Behavioural Processes (doing/sensing): breath, cough, cry, laugh.

Participant Roles: behaviour and circumstance e.g. The athlete breathed in and out, she laughed at the joke.

Behaviour: the athlete/she

Process: breathed/laughed

Circumstances: in and out/at the joke

v. Verbalization Process (Saying): claim, announce, state, etc.

Participant Roles: sayer, verbiage and receiver e.g. The man claimed that he saw the murder.

Sayer: the man

Process: claimed

Verbiage: that he saw the murder/announced it

Receiver: to the National Assembl

- vi. Existential Process (existing/happening): is, was, etc.
Participation Roles: Dummy “there” and existent e.g. There was a fight.
Dummy: there
Process: was
Existent: a fight

In sum, transitivity entails the relationship between the action of the Actor (or its variants) and its effect on the Goal (or its variants).

4. Literature review

A review of literature reveals some significant gaps needed to be bridged and further provides the basis for this study. For instance, Osisanwo’s (2016) study explores the semantic roles allocated to different participants within a sentence. The study examines how social actors, implicated in electoral discourse in Nigeria, are allocated specific roles in the news report of two widely read news magazines, Tell and The News. Eighty-one stories relating to Nigeria’s General Elections (NGE) in Tell (fifty) and The News (thirty-one) covering 2007 and 2013 elections, were purposively sampled. The study reveals that new magazines, representing media practitioners, employ different strategies in allocating roles to the participants presented in various reports. Consequently, activation and passivization were found to be the strategies which media practitioners adopt in allocating roles to participants. The research findings show that when text producers activate social actors, they are presented as the very active forces behind specific events, whereas when passivised, they are represented as recipients of the activity/event.

The study further discloses that the ideological basis of the allocation of roles to the various social actors is connected to the belief that news magazines are the agents of social mobilization in the dissemination and control of the views of news consumers. According to Osisanwo, this conforms to Halliday’s view that the ideational function of the clause is “meaning representation” (1985, p.101).

Similarly, Brady’s (2013) study, conducted at the University of Birmingham was aimed at applying the principles of systemic linguistic analysis to undertake a comparison of the style and communication functionality of two short extracts of similar subject from the two British newspapers – The Sun and The Guardian. The sample extracts are the texts of the newspapers reportage on the murder of a British soldier, Drummer Lee Rigby, by an Islamic extremist. The research focus was on experiential level of systemic functional analysis. The research argues that through the analysis of the lexico-grammatical choices made by writers in each article, different perspectives of events are revealed. He explains that in The Sun, the perspective is localized, offering a personalized account of events, whereas in The Guardian, it is internationalized, contextualizing the attack in terms of its relevance to the state.

The study reveals that in the analysis of the material processes, it was shown that The Sun emphasized the role of the killers and the by-standers in the attack by placing them in the ‘Actor’ position. The specific lexico-grammatical choices underpinning the presentation of the Actors in The Sun were also revealing of its intention to characterize the two participant’s sets, constructing a more personalized account of the events that was predicted upon subjective assessment (White, 2000). The research result equally shows that, in The Guardian, the police were the most frequently occurring participants set to feature as ‘Actor’, underlining The Guardian’s emphasis on national security (White, 2000). An examination of the lexico-grammatical choices underlining the presentation of the police in ‘Actor positions’ in The Guardian also demonstrates the need for clarity and accuracy which is evident in the use of classifiers to denote them.

The above reviews provide the needed logic, guide and direction to this paper not necessarily in terms of theoretical conceptualization but also in relation to the general application of systemic functional model in the linguistic analysis of selected newspaper headlines from The Nation and The Punch.

5. Results

Table 1.

Ideational Function in Newspaper Headlines

Text (1)		Who	Process	Verbiage	Receiver
	Verbal Process	Jonathan's ADC	states role	in ₦10b gift	for PDP chiefs
Text (2)		Participant/Actor	Process	Participant/Goal	Circumstance
	Material Process	EFCC	Sends	INTERPOL	after Moro's accomplice
Text (3)		Subject/Goal	Process	Circumstance	Clause/Reason
	Material Process	Ex/Governor	under watch	in UAE circumstance	over \$517 million loot
Text (4)		Sensor	Process	Phenomenon	
	Mental Process	Seven Ex-Governors, others	to lose	loot kept in Dubai	
Text (5)		Goal/Subject	Process	Circumstance	
	Material Process	David Mark	dragged	into global secret assets storm	
Text (6)		Sayer	Receiver	Process	Verbiage
	Verbal Process	Witness	Saraki	Got	salary for four years after tenure
Text (7)		Participant/Existent	Actor	Process	Goal
	Material Process	23.3 b bribe	bank, INEC officials	Refund	₦408.7m
Text (8)		Existent	Actor	Process	Goal
	Material Process	Discrepancies	Buhari	Sacks	budget director
Text (9)		Actor	Process	Goal	Circumstance
	Material Process	EFCC	links	Ex-CDs Badeh	To ₦4.4 bn NIMASA fraud
Text (10)		Actor	Process	Goal	Circumstance
	Material Process	FG	raises	Panel	to probe EFCC, ICPC

Text		Actor	Process	Goal	Circumstance	
(11)	Material Process	EFCC	recovers	₦900m	from Jonathan's kinsman	
(12)	Material Process	EFCC	seizes	29 properties	from three Ex-Air Force chiefs	
(13)	Verbal Process	Sayer	Receiver	Process	Kwara funds	Verbiage Target to repay personal loans
(14)	Verbal Process	Sayer	Receiver	Process	Looters	Verbiage Target mere figures not enough
		Nigerians	Buhari	name, shame		

Text (1): Jonathan's ADC states role in ₦10b gift for PDP chiefs.

Verbal process:

Who: Jonathan's ADC

Process: states role

Verbiage: in ₦10b gift

Receiver: for PDP chiefs

Text (2): EFCC sends INTERPOL after Moro's accomplice

Material Process

Participant/Actor: EFCC

Process: sends

Participant/Goal: INTERPOL

Circumstance (location in space): after Moro's accomplice.

Text (3) Ex-governor under watch in UAE over and \$517 million loot

Material Process

Subject/Goal: Ex-governor

Process: under watch

Circumstance (Location in space): In UAE circumstance (Clause: reason): Over \$517 million loot.

Text (4) Seven Ex-Governors, others to lose loot kept in Dubai

Mental Process

Sensor: Seven Ex-Governors, other

Process: to lose

Phenomenon: loot kept in Dubai

Text (5): David Mark dragged into global secret assets storm

Material Process

Goal/Subject: David Mark

Process: dragged

Circumstance (location in space): Into global secret assets storm

Text (6) Witness: Saraki got salary for four years after tenure

Verbal Process

Sayer: Witness

Receiver: Saraki

Process: Government

Verbiage: salary for four years after tenure

Text (7): ₦23.3b Bribe: Bank INEC officials refund ₦408.7 million

Material Process

Participant/Existent: ₦23.3 billion bribe
Actor: bank, INEC officials
Process: refund
Goal: ₦408.7 million
Text (8): Discrepancies, Buhari Sacks Budget Director

Material Process

Existent: Discrepancies
Actor: Buhari
Process: Sacks
Goal: budget director
Text (9) EFCC Links Ex-CDS Badeh to N4.4 bn NIMASA Fraud

Material Process

Actor: EFCC
Process: Links
Goal: Ex-CDS Badeh
Circumstance: to N4.4 bn NIMASA Fraud
Text (10): FG Raises Panel to Probe EFCC, ICPC

Material Process

Actor: FG
Process: Raises
Goal: Panel
Circumstance: To Probe EFCC, ICPC
Text (11): EFCC Recovers N 900m From Jonathan's kinsman

Material Process

Actor: EFCC
Process: Recovers
Goal: N900m
Circumstance: From Jonathan's Kinsman
Text (12): EFCC Seizes 29 Properties from three Ex Air Force Chiefs

Material process

Actor: EFCC
Process: Seizes
Goal: 29 Properties
Circumstance: from three Ex Air Chiefs

Text (13): Witness Saraki Used Kwara Funds to Repay Personal Loans

Verbal Process

Sayer: Witness
Receiver: Saraki
Process: Used
Verbiage: Kwara Funds
Target: to Repay Personal Loans

Text (14): Nigerians Buhari Name, Shame Looters Mere Figures not enough

Verbal process

Sayer: Nigerians
Receiver: Buhari
Target: Looters
Verbiage: Mere figures not enough

6. Discussion

From the data, it has been observed that the material processes are the most dominant process type employed by the writers of the newspapers in casting their headlines. Out of 14 sampled texts, the material processes occur nine times, thereby validating Halliday's assertion of the significant frequency

of material process. They are processes that are concerned with construing experience happening in event. In keeping with the objective of this study, our focus is to uncover the ideology of news or text producers by examining the allocation of roles to participants in the transitivity structure of the clause. As Osisanwo (2016, p.158) rightly observes, “The allocation of roles in the representation of social actors is a very important and useful tool in getting the ideology of news or text producer”.

Accordingly, *The Punch* employs material transitivity processes in its headlines with different roles allocated to the participants in texts 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12, all couched with the transitivity structure of: Existent + Actor + Process + Goal + Circumstance. However, there is a slight difference in the roles that the different participants undertake in the clause. In the transitivity structure, it is observed that there is an overlap of processes. For instance, the presence of existent in the material clause is often associated with the existential transitivity process.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p.216) explain that “the regions have core areas and these represent prototypical members of the process types. The regions are continuous, shading into one another and these border areas represent the fact that the process types are fuzzy categories.” To educate on this inter-relationship of categories of different processes by contrasting prototypical examples of verbal and relational clauses, the verbal clause include “sayer” and “receiver” as the relational clauses. From Halliday’s view, it is observed that there is no watertight compartmentalization of these different processes and therefore overlapping into another is noticed.

Another reason for this overlapping of categories in our sampled texts is in the fact that on the borderline between the relational and the material are the processes concerned with the existential processes; that is, the process types are simply recognized to be, or to happen or exist. Accordingly, the text producers in *The Punch* use this existential category of “existent” to foreground their stories in order to guide and remind the readers of these topical corruption cases. On the role allocation, *The Nation* employs non-human actors in the subjected position. This can be seen in texts (9), (11) and (12), in the use of the proper noun EFCC as well as report in text. The use of this non-human actor mostly made up of national representations as participants, is to orient the clause within its context – the Nigeria’s socio-political milieu.

The ideological basis for the projection of this national institution in the texts is to present it as the active force behind the fight against corruption, a key campaign promise of President Muhammadu Buhari. This goes a long way in convincing the masses that the EFCC is alive and active: because EFCC is the agency that carries out the processes of arresting, tracing and getting petition against financial crimes suspects. In text (9), the non-human actors ‘report’ is passivised through non-premodification of the noun. This is because one is ignorant of the particular report that indicts ex-military chiefs, a situation capable of leaving room for generalization. Passivation is a linguistic strategy which shows social actors as recipients of a given activity or event. Beyond this, it allows the text producers to be silent about the actors of specific events.

For writers to foreground the goal of the process, ex-military chiefs, serving as the goal, suffer indictment whereas the non-human actor “reports” that indict them are backgrounded. It appears about what happens to these retired national figures of the nation’s armed forces. In text (10), “FG Raises Panel to Probe EFCC, ICPC,” the material clause with human social actors in the subjected position is a transitive clause. The action presented is direct. The subject “FG” is used by the writer to represent the actors who perform the act of raising the panel for the probe. The clause helps in bringing out the role played by “FG” in the process.

Mental Processes

The Nation makes use of mental transitivity processes. In Text (4), “seven ex-governors, others to lose loot kept in Dubai INEC” shows the use of sensor and phenomenon as the main participants. The mental processes are concerned with thinking and feeling. This process type speaks more to the psychological consciousness of the reader rather than physical actions. In their ideological pursuit of anti-corruption issues in Nigeria, the author in text (4) construes seven ex-governors, others as the sensor while loot kept in Dubai is the phenomenon; the process, to lose, a non-finite process marked off by a to-infinitive, construes the writers thinking that all politicians and looters of the treasury who run to stack their ill-gotten wealth will soon have their wealth seized.

Verbal Processes

There are instances of the use of the processes of verbalization in the headlines of *The Nation* Newspaper.

Text (1): Jonathan's ADC states role in ₦10 billion gift for PDP chiefs.

Text (6): Witness: Saraki got salary for four years after tenure

Text (13): Witness Saraki Used Kwara Funds to Repay Personal Loans

In text (1), the experiential function, which states role, can be analyzed from the process type, which is the verbal group. In the clause, "Jonathan's ADC" is the human actor whose voice is reported. He is the sayer who states his role in ₦10 billion gift, while PDP chiefs is the receiver.

Ideologically, the clause seems to be woven around confession and plea for mercy which further reinforces the view that the anti-corruption fight of the government is achieving success. Moreover, the receiver for PDP chiefs buttresses the argument by the APC – led Federal Government that the last administration of President Jonathan frittered the nation's resources on party politics and electioneering.

The human sayer in text (13) is "Witness" while "Saraki" serves in the clause as the identified, a feature of relational transitivity process. This is because on the border line between mental and relational is the process which represents symbolic relationships construed in human consciousness and enacted in the form of language like saying and meaning (Halliday, 2004). The verb "used" employed in the transitivity structure of the clause is deployed to ideologically paint a gory picture of the endemic corruption that characterises democratic dispensation. This is because other verbs such as *spent* would have been employed. The verbiage, "Kwara Funds" and the target, "to repay personal loans" further suggests the profligacy of that administration.

In text (6), the common noun witness referred to as sayer is the human actor whose voice is being reported as telling us that Saraki (the receiver) got (process) salary for four years (verbiage). This statement supports the idea that the anti-corruption fight is gaining momentum. The human whose view is synonymous with that of the text producer is quoted as a social agent who calls on the masses to call their leaders both past and present to account for their stewardship. The use of this process type enables the writer to add voices to news worthy of individuals, groups and institution.

7. Conclusion

Language evidently plays a unique role as a vehicle through which meaning is conveyed, people's thoughts and actions expressed, ideologies shared and social solidarity maintained. In playing such a role, language can be put to use either orally or in written form, as in the case of newspaper writing.

In line with the goal of this paper, which sought to establish this stated role of the English language by examining newspaper reportage of anti-corruption issues in Nigeria, the paper relied on the three metafunctional levels of meaning of M. A. K. Halliday's systemic functional grammar (SFG) as its theoretical pivot. The analysis of ideological representations on the selected papers reveals patterns of transitivity in the headlines that "we can use language to talk about our experience of the world, including the world in our minds, to describe and state the entities involved in them" (Thompson, 2004, p.30). Social relations can be maintained in communication through direct offers of information by the use of simple indicatives while insisting that simple topical themes selection is useful when trying to pass an important message that borders on the general wellbeing of the populace.

It has been discovered in the study that the transitivity category of ideational (experiential) meaning helps the linguistic scholar to unveil the communicative functionality of language.

This study, therefore, has some policy implications in language teaching and print journalism. First, teachers of the English language at various levels of education should be more acquainted with the role of language in ideological transmission as well as the strategies by means of which such ideologies are represented in not just the media but in other channels of communication. Among such strategies as noted are activation, passivation, verbalization, role allocation to participants and thematisation or national representation. The language teachers and curriculum designers should incorporate these notions in the curriculum and lessons for the learners. By so doing, Nigerian students (including other concerned nationals), who primarily use the English language as second language or lingua franca, would become more proficient and conversational in their written or spoken discourses.

Besides, journalists, editors and writers of news and news headlines should develop keener interest in language use in the media, having discovered a significant correlation between the quality of language used in the print media and the kind of ideology or message communicated to the masses.

This study concludes that the language of newspaper writing is to a very large extent unique. One important way of viewing this uniqueness is the way words are woven together and meaning encoded into texts for the primary function of social orientation of the masses.

References

- Brady, K. (2013). The construction of "Truth": A Matter for the state or a story from the street? A functional grammar analysis of two different newspaper articles report on the murder of British soldier, Drummer Less Rigby by Islamic Extremist. Unpublished Master's Seminar. University of Birmingham, United Kingdom.
- Eagleton, T. (1991). *Ideology: An introduction*. London: Verso.
- Ezeifeke, C. R. (2016) Analysis of thematic prominence in selected nigerian inaugural political speeches. *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 17(2). <http://www.ajol.info/index.php/ujah/article/view/142661>. (Retrieved on 17th February 2017.)
- Fiske, J.(1994). *Media matters: Everyday culture and political change*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M .A K. (1985). *Languages and social semiotics*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Routledge.
- Halliday, M. A. K. & Hasan R (1985). *Language, context and text, aspects of languages in social-semiotic perspective*. Victoria: Deakin University Press
- Halliday M. A K. & Methiessen C .M .M (2014). *An Introduction to functional grammars (4th edition)*. New York: Routledge,
- Hasan R (1987) The grammarian dream, lexis as most delicate grammar, pp. 25-38 in M .A K. Halliday, and R. F Fawcett, (editors) *New Development in Systematic Linguistics. Theory and Description*. London: Pinter.
- Hasan, R (1985). *Linguistics, languages and verbal art*. Victoria: Deakin University Press
- Hodge, B., Kress, G. & Jones, G. (1979). The ideology of middle management, pp81-93. In : R. Fowler (Ed.). *Language and Control*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Kress, G.(1985). Ideological structures in discourse, pp. 27-42. In : T. A. van Dijk (Ed.). *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, 4. Orlando: Academic Press.
- Olowe, J. H.O.(1993). *Language and ideology in Nigerian Newspapers in the English medium*. An Unpublished Ph.D Thesis. Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife.
- Osisanwo, A. (2016). Role allocation in the media representation of participants in selected electoral discourses in Nigeria. *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications*, 23, 183-204. <http://www.athensjournals.gr/media/2016-2-3-3-osisanwo.pdf>.(retrieved on 16th February 2018).
- Robert, E & Umoekah, E.(2019). Exploring etyle in modern fiction: An example of Kaine Agary's Yellow. *GRAINS: Journal of the Association of Nigerian Authors, Ebonyi State Chapter*,1(1),56-81.
- Simpson, P. (2007). *Stylistics* . New York: Routledge.
- Tabe, C. A. & Fieze, N.I. (2018). A critical discourse analysis of newspaper headlines on the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. *British Journal of English Linguistics*, 6(3), 64-83.<http://www.eajournals.org>. (Retrieved on 3rd January 2019).
- Taiwo, R.(2007). Langaue, ideology and power relations in Nigerian newspaper headlines. *Nebula*, 4(1), 218-246.
- Thompson, G.(2004). *Introducing functional grammar*. 2nd ed. London: Hodder Education.
- Ufot, B. & Thomas, I. (2016). The English language and Afro Saxons: A systemic study of the communicative qualities of a selection of African prose passages. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6(3), 463-474. <http://www.academypublication.com/ojs/index..php/told/article/view/06034634> (Retrieved on 15th January 2018).

- Van Dijk, T. (2006). Ideology and discourse analysis. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 11(2), 115-140. <http://www.tandfonline.com> (Retrieved on 3rd January 2019).
- White, P. R. (2000). *Functional grammar*. ODL Coures, CELS, Ch 5. Birmingham: University of Birmingham.