

Research article

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF GENRES IN SELECTED NEWS EDITORIALS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study is a linguistic analysis of selected editorials on Ekiti 2014 gubernatorial election. The research work has two main objectives which are to analysis the various items used in the selected editorials in order to identify the genre type and to identify the various communication events of the editorials. This paper selected six editorials from three Nigeria newspapers namely; The Nation, The Vanguard and The Punch from June 19 to June 27, 2014 which is the election month. Hallidays systemic functional grammar and critical discourse analysis are models adopted. The results obtained show that certain communicative events shape the contents of news editorials, the events that motivated some editorials are most times (but not always) overtly realized, and that in conveying editorial content to the society. The work showed that as numerous as the importance of news is in our society, some editors make use of their outlets as a tool to opine their political, religious and biased views, among others.

Keywords: genre, news, editorial, linguistic, analysis

Introduction

Editorials are columns or pages in the dailies reserved for editors to freely discuss trending societal issues. Some of the subject matters represented in the editorials include politics, family living, and social lives and so on. Common and most interesting of them all is politics. This is because the society wants to know what is happening in the government. The activity of the media to bring news close to the people and its obligation to pass only the truth becomes a serious ideological issue. Wodak (2001) reveals that news is not an objective representation of facts but a

cultural construct whereby journalists report what is newsworthy. The complexity of media discourse is evident in the presence of influential linguistic elements that have underlying meanings apart from the literal information which portray a great impact on the general public because of the varying political, ethnic and sometimes religious interests of the editors. The power of the media to represent things and influence knowledge, beliefs and values in readers cannot be overemphasized. There are decisions that are usually seen as editorial decisions. These decisions influence what is included and excluded in a specific newspaper. Editors, among other news producers, wield much influence and include the news items which they consider suitable and of interest to the target audience and exclude those which are of little interest to them. And they reflect the social and economic interests of the owners of the news institution and the political party whom the owners support. Language is a powerful communicative tool in the representation of things. Language could shape the perception of an individual and groups of people in society because through it people express sentiments about what they think of. Reah (2002:1) defines news as information about recent events that are of interest to a sufficiently large group, or that may affect the lives of a sufficiently large group. The content of which has social, political and educational role. Fairclough, (1995) believes that the news is a recontextualization of an event and this is represented according to the goals, values and priorities of the writer. The media understand the use of language as a part of media culture and ethics (Bells 2000). On this ground, this paper presents a word cloud frequency count of characterized semantic classificatory field which depict ideologies using Systemic Functional Grammar(SFG)

Editorial Ideologies lie in exposing the hidden meanings that are reflected in everyday discourse. Wodak (2007: 2) confirms that ideology expressed in the editorials is one of the most complex of the terms beliefs, opinions and ideologies. Hall (1997:28) avers that there is no simple relationship of reflection, imitation or one-to-one correspondence between language and the real world. The media is not just a conduit for the transfer of meanings from the central corporation to audiences; the media are part of a generalized context and interplay of meaning making. The media do not exist out there, but are immersed in the everyday practices and meaning-making of individuals and communities across the globe: they are a significant resource in the formation and construction of contemporary culture(s). This premise accounts for the reason the researcher has decided to explore the latent ideology in selected political editorials in the dailies. The editorial ideology is therefore woven around the truth and valuable information evident in the news media as related cultural, institutional and political process that affect all mediation. To Olowe (1993:8) the editor and his reporters on the one hand and their audience constitute an ideological class.

The print media is the major tool used in relaying political discourse. In their electoral reportage, the Nigerian newspapers use different linguistic devices in representing individuals, political parties and groups, etc. who are involved one way or another in the activity. Given the above, it is believed that language serves certain ideological preferences or views. Given that language is a social tool for constructing and conveying ideology, this study gives importance to the presence and dynamics of ideology in linguistic representations. Aschale (2013) use experience and information from critical discourse analysis to investigate Barack Obama's speeches with relations to the Middle East and North America. He adopts Fairclough Analytical framework which has been remodeled to be concept of explanatory critique by Balskar. He take notes of Obama's clue words, phrases, sentences, and paragraph that signal representation, emergence and the order of transdisciplinary way. The researcher investigates the issue of morality and religion change, ideology contestation, ideology identity and background in the speeches and how the language of Obama has fully established the above.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Critical discourse analysis and systemic functional grammar are the models adopted for this research while SGF emphasize on the importance of language as a resource for making meaning and also claims that meanings reside in systemic patterns of choice (Halliday 1991) Critical discourse analysis explains the relationship among language ideology and power (wang 2010).

Systemic functional grammar emphasizes the importance of language as a resource for making meaning; it also claims that meanings reside in systemic patterns of choice (Halliday 1991). A linguistic choice made by

writer/reader in a communicative chain is the focus of SFG within the context of other potential choices available to the user. Systemic Functional Grammar argues that to get a better understanding of the meaning of the actual linguistic choices made by users, one needs to relate the cognitive presupposition of the writer. The present study relies on SFG and CDA to bring out the latent ideologies in political editorials in *The Punch*, *The Vanguard* and *The Nations* newspapers. The aspect of SFG also to be examined in the papers is the ideational component of meaning that deploys writers' lexicogrammatical features to construct patterns of experience or create their perception of the world.

The critical discourse analysis is also relevant here because of 'them' versus 'us' presented in the selected editorials (Van Dijk, 2004) which consist of two main discursive strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other presentation will be adapted.

Methodology

The collection of data included news editorial from *The Nation* (three), *The Punch* (two), and *Vanguard* (one). Only those editorials with topics on 2014 governorship election in Ekiti State Nigeria were selected. The data were collected by visiting archives of educational institution where accesses to the Newspapers were granted. In some other cases, visits were made to some of the newspaper houses to access their archive for relevant editorials for this study.

The three national dailies were selected for their wide readership and coverage of political editorials. These are: *The Nation*, *The Vanguard* and *The Punch*. Although the *Vanguard* newspaper published only one editorial on the Ekiti 2014 governorship election as discovered on the field, there are useful derivations from the data to the understanding of the genre in the editorial. Voyant, an online application was used for the text analysis for accuracy in occurrence of words.

The Nation

According to Nwammuo, Edegoh and Iwok (2015), *The Nation* was established in 2006 by Ahmed Bola Tinubu, a politician and the former Governor of Lagos State. It is politically controlled daily. It is a daily newspaper published in Lagos. A 2009 survey revealed that it was the second the second most read newspaper in Nigeria. On its website, the paper says it stands for freedom, justice and the market economy (<http://www.thenationonlineng.net>). The paper targets business and political elite, the affluent, the educated and the upwardly mobile. Further, the paper covers business and economy, public policies, the democratic process and institutions, sports, arts and culture. *The Nation*, however, according to Nwammuo, Edegoh and Iwok (2015) bases its coverage on the political interests of its owner.

The Punch

The Punch newspaper was founded by two friends, James Aboderin and Sam Amuka in August 1970 under The Companies Act of 1968 to engage in the business of publishing newspapers. It was designated to perform the tripartite functions of the popular mass media: informing, educating and entertaining. In November 1976 their first edition was designed to favour a friendlier apolitical approach to news reporting, combining footage of social events with everyday political news. The paper sustains itself by delving into broad issues that interest myriad people. However, during the second republic, political exigencies had introduced conflicts to its original intentions, the duo parted ways. And M.K.O Abiola was wooed by Aboderin for support. This revived the paper but not without taking on a political stance, mostly against Shagari regime. *The Punch* newspaper thus began to have anti-government tone. For two consecutive years 1998 and 1999- the research and marketing services (RMS) Lagos, published independent surveys in which *Punch* was rated as the most widely-read newspaper

The Vanguard

Vanguard Newspapers was established in 1984 by Mr. Sam Amuka. The maiden copy of the daily Vanguard hit the newsstands on July 15, 1984. It aims to serve the people through unflinching commitment to free enterprise, the rule of law and good governance (<http://www.vanguardngr.com>). The paper has on its stable, the Daily Vanguard, Saturday Vanguard and Sunday Vanguard. These include: Financial Vanguard, Allure, Sweet Crude, Hitech, Sports Vanguard and Cyber life. These product-specific titles attract the attention of serious policy makers, businessmen, politicians and students. As one of the leading newspapers in Nigeria, Vanguard has developed a rich heritage as the most entertaining, refreshing, authoritative, detailed and reader friendly newspaper in the country. To meet the growing demands of the market, the paper circulates 20,000 copies (daily) in Lagos, the nation's business heartbeat. Others include Abuja-12,000 copies, South- West 15,000, South-South 25,000, South-East 15,000, North Central 18,000, North-East 7,500 and North-west 7,500. These total 120,000 copies with a print run of 130,000 copies daily (<http://www.vanguardngr.com>). Vanguard is a newspaper with a penetrating reach to all the nooks and crannies of Nigeria which is today complemented by the most sophisticated, global readership. The newspaper was however accused of being bias in favor of the Federal Government of Nigeria in a study on political coverage in 2013 (Brown and Udomisor, 2015).

Samples gotten from the three dailies were subjected to presentation and analysis.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The excerpts below show the genre of data as political. The communicative event is centered on the governorship election in Ekiti in the year 2014. Although in the excerpts, there is no overt linguistic element that conveys the expression, the readers' understanding of the context which was fore-grounded by the title of each of the excerpts makes it easy to identify the genre. Not only this, the ideology is that of 'them' versus 'us'.

Representation of ideology in the Nation Newspaper

There was a clear demarcation between the citizenries and the government as illustrated in the three excerpts.

Data 1

THE show of shame in Ado-Ekiti on June 8 is an indication that democracy is still deformed in Nigeria. Security agencies trained and armed to protect democratic institutions, leaders and the polity, interpret their roles as acting in partisan interests to defend the president and his appointees. It is no longer profound to submit that the Ekiti State governorship election scheduled for Saturday would be a test-run for next year's general elections. The display of partiality by the Ekiti State command of the police suggests that the institutions involved in election management have not really learnt the necessary lessons.

The practice of sweeping out the marks of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) by members and supporters of the All Progressives Congress (APC) is already a convention. It was therefore to be expected that following the mega rally held by the PDP at the OluyemiKayode Stadium the previous day, the APC would symbolically sweep out the stadium and adjoining streets. It is part of the political game and does not in itself provoke violence.(The Nation, Monday June 16, 2014)

Data 2

IF the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) intends to be taken seriously as an impartial arbiter of democracy, we shall know that on Saturday, June 21.
(The Nation Tuesday June 20, 2014)

Data 3

LAST Saturday's governorship election in Ekiti State might have been concluded and a winner elected.
(The Nation, Friday June 24, 2014)

However, taking into account the entire excerpts from each of the three editorials (Data 1 to 3) by *The Nation Newspaper* with the use of the Voyant word cloud and chart, the genre is, therefore, identified as shown in the diagram below:

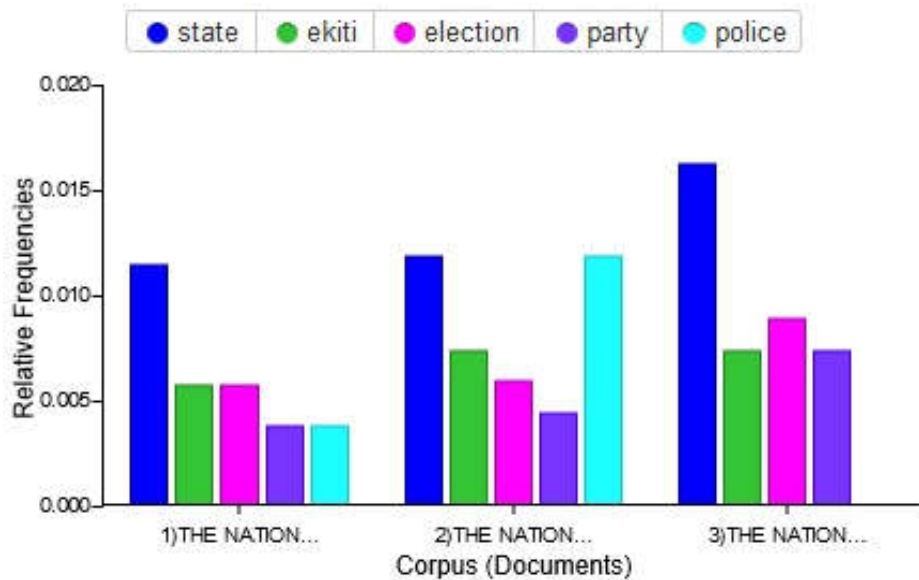


Fig. 1.1: Bar chart showing the dominant linguistic items in the three (3) editorials from *The Nation Newspaper* (Data 1 to 3). Source: This researcher, 2018

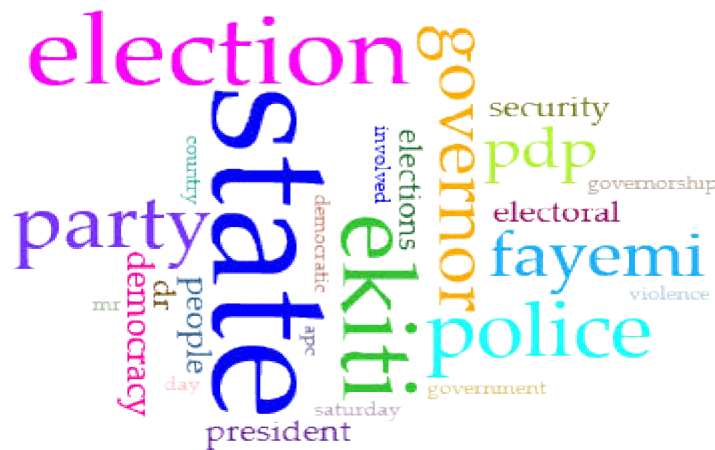


Fig. 1.2: Word Cloud showing the dominant linguistic items in the three (3) editorials from *The Nation Newspaper*. Source: This researcher, 2018

The bar chart and word cloud in figures 1.1 and 1.2 above are the results from three excerpts (data 1, 2 and 3) with 2,398 total words and 908 unique word forms. The corpus indicates that the most used words (counting from five upwards) in the three editorials from *The Nation Newspaper*. The word “state” occurs in a total of thirty-one (31) times across the three editorials. This is followed by “Ekiti” and “election” with a total of sixteen (16) occurrences each. “Party” and “police” have a total of twelve (12) mentions each. Surprisingly, only one of the three principal actors, “Fayemi”, was mentioned up to ten (10) times in the three editorials altogether. This can be a pointer to the identification of a bias. Furthermore, since no two news editorial may exactly be the same, even, when the topic is

the same; it is, therefore, important to attempt a genre identification of the editorials of the other newspaper selected for this study. The genre is that of power tussle. These are evident in the semantic fields such as: show of shame, violence, partiality, partisan and so on.

Representation of ideology in The Punch Newspaper

From the excerpts above, it is evident that The Punch represents a positive attitude of the electoral process in Ekiti. This is evident in the positive representation given to the governor and his activities in the state. *The Punch*, a cursory look at the opening sentences of data 4 and 5 above show a varied style. In the first data, use of a complex sentence was deployed unlike the second data where use of a simple sentence was deployed.

Data 4

Real winners of Ekiti poll

The iconic image of a smiling Governor KayodeFayemi welcoming into his office an elated Ayo Fayose, who had just defeated him, was a fitting close to the successful Ekiti State governorship election held last Saturday. If an incumbent governor exhibiting nobility in defeat was surprising, the rare efficiency displayed by the electoral authorities was no less inspiring. Such conduct, taken for granted in mature democracies, has not taken root here. The Ekiti poll should therefore be the take-off point for a paradigm shift in the way politicians, the Independent National Electoral Commission and security agencies play their roles in our wobbly democracy. It was an election that had several winners. The most prominent was Fayose, who had vacated the same office in a storm of scandal and odium in 2006. Against all odds, including the incumbency factor Fayemi enjoyed, an ongoing corruption trial, allegations of murder and a lack of a coherent programme compared to his main opponents' articulation, Fayose won in all the 16 local government areas of the state and scored 59 per cent of the valid votes cast. INEC also proved bookmakers wrong by conducting an election that (quite unusually) was devoid of the usual late or non-arrival of voting materials and personnel, ballot-stuffing and collusion between politicians and officials. According to the Transition Monitoring Group, an umbrella for about 400 civic rights organizations.

The Punch June 27, 2014

Data 5

ALL is set for the governorship-election in Ekiti State on Saturday. The Independent National Electoral Commission has recruited 7,941 ad hoc electoral personnel for the assignment, with its Chairman, AttahiruJega, singing a redemption song. The mood of the police is not different either. They have deployed more security personnel and materials in the state to reinforce existing security measures. Surveillance helicopters, Armoured Personnel Carriers, bomb disposal expert s, counter-terrorism team and Police Mobile Force operatives are all part of the sophisticated security set-up to deal with a possible breakdown of law and order. This awesome safety measures are not without reason. The state has an unedifying electoral past, defined by violence and manipulation of results. In 1983, the old Ondo State, of which Ekiti State was a part, went up in flames over election disputes. The Resident Electoral Commissioner for Ekiti State, Ayoka Adebayo, in the 2009 rerun had decried the pressure on her to announce a result that did not bear the imprimatur of the electorate. "They want me to announce fake results. I can't at my age...I am a Christian. I cannot act against my conscience," she reportedly said. But she still went ahead to announce a false result that was later upturned by the courts. Two weeks ago, precisely on June 8, Ado-Ekiti, the state capital, boiled as the police fired at a crowd of All Progressives Congress supporters, which resulted in the death of a young man, TaiwoAkinola. The deceased was one of the party loyalists that went to the stadium to "sweep away" the footprints of Peoples Democratic Party members, who had held their rally

actors got some mentions. In this, “Fayose” is mentioned in a total of seven (7) times whereas “Fayemi” has five (5) mentions. This may also have some implications on the stance or bias of the writer(s) as would be discussed in subsequent analyses.

Moreover, an exploration of the communicative event and genre in *The Vanguard Newspaper*, the Nation newspaper selected for the study, is important for the identification of the genre type.

Representation of ideology in the Vanguard Newspaper

The ideology deployed in the Vanguard could be known intermediate as the governor (Fayemi) uses a positive politeness to hedge of corruption. He asserted that he could have used his office to rig the election in his favour but he has remained calm because of his nonpartisan. He culminated on some of the negative things he was capable of due to the power he possessed which include: harassment and intimidation. The news also portrayed governor Fayemi has a good man who has positively influenced his citizenries. ‘We cannot ignore examples like Dr. Fayemi’s character affected those he led; he inspired them to be peaceful. If he wanted war, Ekiti would have been in turmoil in abundance. Dr. Fayemi is not only speeches. He is about credentials matching character. He proved there was more to life than being in public office. We need more people who want to serve the people, and who would accept the people’s decision on who serves them. Nigeria needs people who make the difference – positively.’

Data 6

THE most important thing about last Saturday’s governorship election in Ekiti State was the equanimity, grace, humility with which Dr. KayodeFayemi conceded victory. Such moments are rare in our politics and made all the difference to how both sides received the result. Dr. Fayemi chose his words and the weight they borne delivered on the type of politics Nigerians want to embrace. Our people are tired of leaders who lead them to war, usually from behind, with the masses as cannon fodders. Gov. KayodeFayemi of Ekiti (I) and Governor-Elect, Mr Ayo Fayose, during Fayose’s visit to the Governor in Ado-Ekiti on Monday We want peace. The first catalyst for peace, contrary to what many propound, is not justice. Utterances of leaders are important, their lives, their examples are the next most important ways of changing society. Dr. Fayemi conceded victory, called governor-elect Ayodele Peter Fayose, who he addressed as “my brother, congratulating him on his victory”. Action made his words meaningful. Within hours, he was meeting the governor-elect “to discuss the future of our dear state and how we would work together to institute a smooth transition programme. Despite our diverse party affiliations, and regardless of which way we voted on Saturday, we must remember that we are all sons and daughters of Ekiti State. Ekiti is ours to build together.” In our search for ways of deepening our democracy, we tend to emphasize electoral victories over high note performances like the one that Dr. Fayemi gave.

Although the *Vanguard* newspaper published only one editorial on the Ekiti2014 governorship election as discovered on the field, there are useful derivations from the data to the understanding of the genre in the editorial. For the sake of consistency, the word cloud and a chart are deployed as shown below:

CONCLUSION

In this study, the selected Nigerians Newspapers editorials reflect the social functions and values of the media as a voice of the people in a particular society and time. It revealed that the editorials are a means of contributing to trending issues of the day through presentation in an opinionated manner using various linguistic tools. It showed that newspaper editorials do not only fulfilled the aesthetic and ethical requirement of being included in a published news tabloid but serve as a means of sustaining social and corporate responsibility in the society. This paper has shown that; Language is a powerful communicative tool in the representation of things. By means of language, people express sentiments about what they think of themselves and the world they live in. Language is therefore not as simple as to be ideological free. The domain of explicit ideology construction in the dailies are the editorials where editors are given right to express their views. Writers therefore use this means to construct what people pose to be true. The three dailies: Nation, Punch and Vanguard have represented the political situation in Ekiti differently that is, while the nation is reflective and persuasive, the Punch gives more logical information about the election and the Vanguard probes the consciousness of the citizenries as to the reality of their belief system.

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