

AN ANALYSIS OF FEATURE ARTICLES IN THE DAILY TRUST AND THE PUNCH NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

This paper aims at investigating the ideological implication of the use of selective quotes, imaginative statements and emotional words or expressions in the feature articles of the Daily Trust and the Punch newspapers. The analysis of the selected variables is done within the theoretical framework of Fairclough and Van Djick approaches to critical discourse analysis. Eighteen feature articles were selected out of the twenty randomly selected articles for the thesis (Kryjcie and Morgan), within the months of January and April, 2018. The findings of the research reveal that the use of imagery, selective quotes and emotive words/ expressions is commonly identified in feature articles of the sampled newspapers. It is also established the use of multiple quotations in feature articles dealing with political and health issues. Few quotations are present in articles dealing with security issues. It is also established that very few emotional statements are found in articles dealing with health issues in both newspapers. The ideological representation of imaginative expressions, quotations and emotive words is generally meant for creating change and suspicion in the mind of the reader to believe in the writer's ideological view points. The findings of this research also reveal that, there are hidden agenda behind the use of the selected variables depending on the topic of discussion.

Key words: Critical discourse, feature articles, imagery, selective quotes and emotive words

Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a research tool that investigates the use of language as an instrument of social control. Shifting from the traditional perspective of language as a means of

reflecting or expressing reality, CDA seeks to demonstrate how language serves as an active agent in the construction of social reality through the illustration of how it is used in enacting, legitimating and sustaining unequal power relations in discourses across genres and media (Fairclough 1989,1995, van Djick 2001,Wodak 2001). This study examines feature articles in the Daily Trust and the Punch newspapers using the traditional method of CDA with a view to investigate and examine the societal ideology to serve institutional interests which mostly are politically, regionally, and ethnically motivated.

Feature stories are journalistic, researched, descriptive, thoughtful and reflective writing about original ideas (Picard& Brody, 1997). That is to say that feature stories are human-interest articles that focus on particular people, places and events. A feature article is an article that is about "softer" news (Aamidor, 1999). A feature article may be a profile of a person who does a lot of volunteer work in the community or a movie preview. Feature stories are also typically published in newspapers, magazines, newsletters, websites, blobs, television broadcasts and other mass media. In simple terms, feature articles are news stories about real people and events. They are written using clear, simple, accurate and concise language.

However, a close examination of how events are reported in feature articles of Nigerian newspapers would reveal tremendous variation in the use of imagery, selective quotes and emotive words or expressions. Such a choice within a system is considered ideological; hence sentimental (Kress 1976, Fairclough 1989, Halliday and Matthiessen 2004, van Djick 2001). Thus this study seeks to reveal the socio-political ideological nuances of the linguistic variation in the feature stories of Nigerian National newspapers.

The focus of this study is the discourse of feature stories of reports on socio-political issues which includes political, security and health issues. The fundamental assumption of the study is that the discourses on these issues particularly feature articles, have been active in these social struggles and contributed in ideologically polarizing

Nigeria in the way they use language to represent , participants, processes and circumstances in their stories.

Background to the Study

One important strand of research into media discourse is preoccupied with taking a critical stance to media discourse, namely Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Discourse analysis is an active and dynamic discipline and it is to be applied in this research by selecting and collecting data and by analysing the data in accordance with its principles. Spoken or written discourse occurs in particular in social and political settings and is used and understood in different ways, in different social and cultural settings. This is especially important in the media. Discourse analysis which is a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of discourse which views “language as a form of social practice” (Fairclough, 1989:20) and focuses on the ways in which social and political domination is reproduced by text and talk.

Discourses affect our views on all things. Fairclough's framework for discourse analysis situates discourse in a broader context of social relations. This framework brings together text analysis, the analysis of processes of text production and interpretation, and the social analysis of discourse events (Fairclough, 1992) articulates a three-dimensional framework for studying discourse, “where the aim is to map three separate forms of analysis onto one another: analysis of (spoken or written) language texts, analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption) and analysis of discursive events as instances of socio cultural practice” (Fairclough, 1995: 2). This makes it an appropriate tool for the analysis to be carried out here.

Critical discourse analysis examines the use of discourse in relation to social and cultural issues and asks why the discourse is used in a particular way and what the implications are of this kind of use. Critical discourse analysis explores the connection between the use of

language and the social and political contexts in which it occurs. It explores issues such as gender, ethnicity, cultural differences, and ideology and identifies how these are both constructed and reflected in texts. Critical discourse analysis considers language use which is always social and ... both reflects and constructs the social world (Rogers, 2004:5). Thus this piece of research draws on approaches set out by Fairclough, and Van Dijk, and also uses the elements set out as a framework for analysis.

In the last few decades, researchers have grown much interest in newspaper articles of various genres. Most of these researches (such as Mardh 1980, Stauman 1935, Reah 2002) were focused on grammar, titles, and syntactic structure. Researches on feature articles in media discourse in general are limited. The few works done (in Africa) includes: "Analysis of Titles of feature Articles in The Daily Graphics and Ghanaian Times" (Afful 2012); "Textual Aesthetic: A look at Nigerian News and Features" (Godspower U, and Charlse O. 2013), journal paper. "Generic Structure Potential Analysis of Feature Articles in Nigerian Newspaper" (Sunday and Fagunlake, 2017). In tandem with the aforementioned scholars, the present researcher identified that those works did not touch the areas of imagery, selective quotes and use of emotive words. As a result, the current researcher considered the use of *imagery*, *selective quotes* and use of *emotive words* in feature articles (investigating writers' intention and ideology) as areas worth researching in newspapers. The implications and ideologies behind using such variables in feature articles constitute the research problem.

The aim of this research is to investigate the ideological stance of using the selected variables in feature articles. So the objectives of this study are to investigate the linguistic ideology behind the use of imagery in describing a particular situation; to investigate the ideological implication of using selective quotes in the feature articles of the Nigerian newspapers; to examine whether the use of emotive

words or expressions conveys connotative meanings. This is underpinned by the following research questions: What is the linguistic ideology in using imagery in Nigerian feature articles in describing particular situation? What is the ideological implication of using selective quotes in the selected Nigerian feature articles? Is there any use of emotive words or expressions that conveys connotative meanings?

The study is restricted to make a critical analysis on the use of imagery in particular situations. It also examined the linguistic ideology behind the use of selective quotes and the use of emotive words conveying connotative meanings were also be examined. This choice was made in order to investigate how writers of feature articles use such devices to arouse interest in their readers and what is the ideology behind the use of the devices. Secondly, the *Daily Trust* and the *Punch newspapers* were chosen for this research because these papers are national papers and as such they cover a wide range of news items. Also, though there are diverse variables available for research on critical discourse and print media discourse, this research focuses on the use of imagery, the use of emotive words/expressions, and the use of selective quotes in formulating and writing of feature articles in newspapers. The choice of these variables was influenced by the works of Fairlough (1995) and Van Dijk (1988, 1991). Only articles dealing with political, security and health issues were analysed. Also article published within the months of January and April, 2018 were analysed.

The study significantly contributes to scholarship in media discourse and content analysis in general. Secondly, the findings of this study will be useful in bridging the gap that is not filled by previous researchers on media discourse in general and on newspaper articles in particular. Thus, the findings of this study are significant in investigating the perception and ideology behind use of imagery, emotive words, and the use of selective quotes in Nigerian feature articles. This research adds to the areas not covered by previous scholars

on print media discourse by emphasizing on the content, and ideology of feature stories in aspect of newspaper articles – the feature article. Moreover, the study will help writers to know more about constructing a good and well written feature article. It is the hope of the researcher that the research findings will serve as a reference material for both writers and readers of feature articles in the *Daily Trust* and the *punch newspapers*. This research also hopes to give inspiration into text construction and deconstruction in print media discourse.

Methodological Issues

This study relied solely on Nigerian newspaper feature articles as its main source of data. Data were gathered from January, 2018 to April, 2018. The data consisted of feature articles and opinion columns. Forty feature stories on health, security issues and on political discourse were gathered and read. The newspapers were drawn from the newspaper archives of the Bayero University Kano and Sa'adatuRimi College of Education, Kano. Out of these, excerpts were purposively selected for analysis. Specifically, *The Daily Trust* and *The Punch* were selected for the study.

The selection was done along a broad parameter of national spread. *The Daily Trust* and *The Punch* were selected mainly because they usually have articles and columns dealing with issues of security, health and politics. The two newspapers consistently demonstrated a high level of professionalism and objectivity. In addition, the two newspapers enjoy a measure of prestige among a cross section of Nigerian readership.

For our purposes in this study, a modified version of CDA has been devised which includes Fairclough and Van Dijk's approaches to CDA. Fairclough's analysis involves using a range of properties of texts which Fairclough (1995) regarded as potentially ideological. This may lead to choosing certain features that support the claims made by the

analysts while ignoring others that do not support them. In this study, however, a set of variables is selected and examined. Specifically, use of imagery, selective quotes and emotional statements were investigated. These linguistic devices were chosen because they are well suited for a study such as the present one whose aim is to investigate the underlying ideologies that are encoded, reproduced and contested in discourses on political and other social issues (health and security) in the newspapers. Furthermore, interpretation is a key aspect of Fairclough's model. Interpretation has been criticized for being 'critical discourse interpretations' (Widdowson2004:103). Nevertheless, in this study, attention is mainly on interpretation and explanation based on the findings of the linguistic analysis.

Linguistics ideology behind the use of imagery in Nigerian feature Articles

An overriding ideology in the Nigerian print media is the call for political, security and health issues for national interest.

Excerpt 1

Anyone who follows the media actively will see Nigerians have started talking. But the talk is not yet a dialogue and organized with rules that will lead to decisions. They are words of anger and frustration emerging from different groups and camps (*The Punch* January 22, 2018 - pp30 The Opportunities "in Herdsmen/farmers crisis").

The above excerpt is an imaginary statement creating senses of seeing, hearing and feelings. The first sentence create the sense of seeing for the reader to imagine and see Nigerians voicing out or crying out for help and security intervention into the matter. There is also the feeling of anger. In a nutshell, the ideological implication of these senses is to convince the reader to believe in the writers viewpoints.

Excerpt 2

Have you ever seen a governor jump on a table, roar and spit fire! I saw Governor AyedeleFayose do these things during the public hearing on constitution review in February 2006. The venue was the Osun state house of assembly, Osogbo, where delegates from the south- west states converged to discuss the modalities for a review of the country's constitution (*The Punch* January 29, 2018 pp 25 "Why Fayose can Never Forgive Obasanjo").

These lead sentences are imaginative. They were used to create in the mind of the reader senses of seeing and hearing to imaging seeing a governor jumping on a table and roaring at the same time spitting. The writer creates images with the ideological view of convincing the reader to believe in him; creates awareness of had happen in the occasion.

In Another example, imaginative sentences were constructed by the writer with the ideological view of creating awareness and convincing the reader to believe writer's view points.

Excerpt 3

The parliamentary chamber was filled beyond capacity. Many of those who stood in the gallery and hallways were, literally speaking, in strait-jacket; they couldn't see their feet if they decided to look down..... (*The Punch* January 29, 2018 pp 25" Why Fayose can Never Forgive Obasanjo").

Excerpt 4

... corruption smears the nation with the most odious of perception and further impedes economic growth by discouraging investment both local and foreign (*The Daily*

Trust. Monday, February 5, 2018. Buhari: AU's Recognition as an Acid Test pp. 49).

Examining the above excerpt, the writer describes corruption as something that smears the nation with the most odious of perception. The writer creates sense of feeling and smelling to draw the attention of the reader to believe in his view point there by making the reader to understand how corruption impedes Nigeria's economic growth.

Furthermore, on the 7th paragraph of the article the writer states that,

... But the president must walk his talk at home first in this respect. How the president resolves the embarrassing lingering crisis of confirmation of chairman of EFCC, Ibrahim Magu by the senate is one acid test.(*The Daily Trust*. Monday, February 5, 2018." Buhari: AU's Recognition as an Acid Test pp49)

The description of the president's confirmation of the chairman of EFCC as 'an acid test' is also an imaginative statement which makes the reader to use his sense of seeing to imagine an 'Acid test' and compare it with the crisis of confirmation of EFCC chairman by the senate.

Excerpt 5

A recent study led by the University of Bom revealed that consumption of fast food makes the immune system more aggressive in the long term as the immune system reacts similarly to a high calories diet to bacterial infection (*The Daily Trust*- "why you should watch your fast foods". January 23, 2018).

In the above description, the writer creates an imagery scenario to give the reader a clear picture and the different manifestation of the diseases caused by fast food intake.

Excerpt 6

... No country would overlook such act of lawlessness by supposedly herdsmen or treat it with kid gloves considering the fragile nature of the country at the moment.(Daily Trust January 25, 2018”Herdmen attack and implications for national security”).

The writer of the article creates an image in this statement by using kid-gloves to portray the nature of the Nigerian current security/political situation as fragile in nature. All these are done purposely by the writer to express his ideological stand about Nigerian security situation.

Ideological implication of using selective quotes in the feature articles of the selected Nigerian Newspapers

Excerpt 1

..... to take reasonable steps to prevent human rights violations and to the means at its disposal its jurisdiction, to identify those responsible to impose the appropriate punishment and to ensure the victims adequate compensation (“Buhari and Nigeria’s killing field” The Punch newspaper- January, 15 2018pp26)

The above quote is a quote of Velesque Rodrigues. It was cited by the writer to convince and arouse the interest of the reader with the ideology of creating awareness, for the reader to know his right and government responsibilities of investigating violations committed within the jurisdiction, and identify those responsible and impose appropriate punishment.

Through the article, the writer tries to create suspicion in the mind of the reader, that the government and the security agencies of the Nigerian federation are not doing their work.

In support of this assertion,

Excerpt 2

..... it is recalled that the Governor Samuel Ortom has since the enactment of the bill against open grazing in Benue state has been alerting the security agencies pretended they did not hear or see anything. (“Buhari and Nigeria’s killing field”. The Punch newspaper- January, 15 2018pp26)

Excerpt 3

...Bedlum overtook reasons; Maverick Afrobeat singer FelaAnikulapo-Kuti would say “ confusion break bone.” Uproar, cheos, madhouse! (The punch newspapers, january29,2018.” Why Fayose can never forgive Obasanjo”).

Fela’s words were ideological and used by the writer to convince the reader to believe in his ideological view points and capture his attention and the statement is also emotional.

Excerpt 4

Corruption is not African but most corrupt countries are in Africa, president Buhari put it better in Addis Ababa that, “As leaders, we must build synergy between the executive, legislatives and judicial arms of government in order to entrench good governance, transparency and accountability”(The Daily Trust. Monday, February 5,2018. “Buhari: AU’s Recognition as an Acid Test” pp49).

The writer quotes president MuhammaduBuhari’s speech on issues related to corruption in Africa. The ideological representation of the above quote by the writer is to strengthen his belief about the president’s commitment to wipe out corruption in the country. The writer also condemns corruption by quoting late FelaAnikulapoKuti, who defines corruption as “Authority Stealing!”

Excerpt 5

These long term changes may be involved in the development of arteriosclerosis and diabetes, disease linked to fast food intake (*The Daily Trust*- “why you should watch your fast foods”. January 23, 2018).

The writer of this article quotes prof. Dr Erick Latz . Examining the ideological stance of the above quote, the writer quotes this professional to create awareness for the reader to understand the danger of taking fast foods and the damage it may cause to one’s health. The writer further quotes the professor in order to strengthen his belief and ideology about the possible diseases that can cause illness as a result of fast food intake can cause.

Inflammasome are key intracellular signaling complex, that recognize infectious agent and other harmful substances and subsequently release highly inflammatory massagers. The activation by fast foods changes the way in which the genetic information is packaged. The immune system consequently reacts even to small stimuli with stronger inflammatory responses. (*The Daily Trust* “why you should watch your fast foods”. January 23, 2018).

Excerpt 6

Truth be told, Nigeria suffered from all the decisions and the recent release of a list of appointees which included the names of six (or seven) dead people and some from opposition party, is but a tip of that iceberg. BiolaKazeem on twitter lamented that “ HermanHembe, accuse of corruption by ArumeOteh and sacked from House of Representative for electoral fraud, was appointed and chairman”. Award -winning poet IkeoguOke humorously wondered, “ shouldn’t we be celebrating rather than criticizing these ground- breaking(nay, grave breaking)appointment as another country’s or

government's contribution to the annals of the incredible?"(Daily Trust January 1, 2018 "Tomorrow is here!") On the 7th paragraph of the same article, there is another quotation used by the writer to convince the reader to believe in his ideology that this administration has so many problems. "Those in executive arm are stealing their own why can't I take my share?"

Examining the ideological representation of the writer's belief on the current administration is a negative one. The writer, throughout the article the article was criticises the Buhari's administration as government which delayed decision and describes it as a failed government by quoting award winning poet, Ikeogu Oke, who humorously wondered how the president appointed six or seven dead people to different offices.

Use of emotive words or expressions conveying connotative meanings **Excerpt 1**

.... At the same time, it is a grievous insult on persons who have lost loved ones and lack follow feeling! Incidentally, while the security agencies have not gone to him, they are attempting to arrest a preacher who asked his followers not vote for the president come 2019 if he puts himself for re-election. Therefore, the talk should not be allowed to degenerates but become channeled to fruition.("The opportunities in the Herdsmen/ fairness Crisis"- The Punch newspapers January 22,2018 pp30).

The above statements by the writer are emotional. The ideological implication of this statement is for the writer to create awareness and convince the reader to believe in his view point, about the government and security agencies' negligence and lack of concern for the citizens wellbeing and security. He further propagates his ideology by instilling

in the mind of the reader, that the government officials are more about their political ambitions rather than their responsibilities.

Excerpt 2

....Instead, he only summoned the grieving state governor to Aso Rock to give him instruction! This is simply sensitive, uncaring, condescending and shows a lack of follows feeling and contempt for human lives."Buhari and Nigeria's killing fields"- The Punch newspaper pp26).

This is an emotional statement employed by the writer to create and instil suspicion in the mind of the reader. The ideology of employing this device by the writer is to convince the reader to belief in the writer's viewpoints. The writer has the belief that the security agencies and the government do not give priority to the lives and properties of their people.

Excerpt 3

To compound matters, some governors from the president's party gathered a day after the burial in Benue state to urge him to run for a second term in office. Indeed, without any asking them for any apologies, they indicated that they had no apology to anyone(read no apology to Benue people and all who had lost their lives in different part of Nigeria) for supporting his election bid "Buhari and Nigeria's killing fields"- *The Punch Newspaper* pp26).

Examining this statement, the ideology of the writer may also be to convince the reader to lament the Nigerian security situation and lack of government commitment towards improving the security and protection of lives of its citizens. His ideology also depict that he is not in support of the ruling party.

Excerpt 4

....Definitely let's continue the war against all forms of corruption! But beyond that let's get it right: assuming the war against corruption is won, it does not mean that we have won and even started the real war for development and against poverty. The promise of independence (Nigeria will soon be 60!) and governance is not for us to be catching thieves and fighting corruption as such.(The Daily Trust. Monday, February 5,2018. "Buhari: AU's Recognition as an Acid Test" pp49).

These sentences are emotional. The writer's ideology and opinion about the way president Muhammadu Buhari's administration is fighting against corruption or catching thieves against is not only governance , he thought that there are certain things need to be put in place and give priority for good governance. The writer puts it in that way to draw the attention of the reader to believe in his political ideology about good governance.

Excerpt 5

... This despite the majority of citizens welcoming the new year in power blackout and complete darkness because of no fuel to operate their generators!(The Daily Trust- January 2, 2018 "Another un-inspiring presidential address").

And in the last paragraph of the article also, "...This simply does not tally with the fact that the administration just asked for \$ 1 Billion to the same enemy!"

The above quoted emotional statements were used by the above writer too create suspicion in the mind of the reader so that he will believe in the writer's ideology of condemning the success of the present administration.

Excerpt 6

Tomorrow is here!

The title of the article is in emotional tone to capture the attention of the reader. The ideological representation of the title of the article is to show the writer's feeling about the Nigeria's current situation and the way the present government is running the country. Tomorrow is here! (*Daily Trust*, Monday 1, 2018- "Tomorrow is here!").

This expression may have some connotative meanings. It may connote that the writer is holding a belief that president Muhammad Buhari is too slow in making and taking decisions. Now that we are in January, 2018, time is running very fast. What is supposed to be done should be done.

Discussion

In the above excerpts on the use of imagery for example, the writers of the article creates an imagery in the their statements, in the article titled The "Third force" fever (The Punch newspaper January 30, 2018 pg 20) the ideological aim of the description is to capture the attention of the reader to imagine what the former president OlusegunObasanjo's letter caused to the APC party and the supporters of the ruling party. The implication of these statements is for the writer to convince the reader to believe in his ideology and points of view. Fairclough believes there is a link between discourse, ideology and power. To him, ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation (Fairclough, 2003).

Fairclough (1992) opines that ideologies embedded in discursive practices are most effective when they become naturalised and achieve the status of common sense. While arguing that ideology invests language in various ways at various levels, Fairclough avers that

it is not possible to read off ideologies from texts because meanings are products of interpretations, and texts are open to diverse interpretations which may differ in their ideological imports (Fairclough, 1992).

Additionally, emotional statements were used in the above excerpts to create suspicion in the mind of the reader so that he can believe in the writer's ideology of condemning the success of the present administration. The emotional statements were made by the writers to draw the attention of the reader to believe in their viewpoints. Van Dijk (1991:53) believes that lexis is a resource for displaying underlying ideologies in discourse. In his words, "lexis is never neutral: the choice of one word rather than another to express more or less the same meaning, or to denote the same referent may signal the opinions, emotions, or special position of a speaker."

Findings

From the analysis above, the findings are that:

- (i) The use of imagery, selective quotes and emotive words/expressions is commonly identified in both feature articles of the sampled newspapers.
- (ii) Multiple quotations are used in feature articles dealing with political and health issues. Few quotations are present in articles dealing with security issues.
- (iii) It is also established that very few emotional statements are found in articles dealing with health issues in both newspapers.
- (iv) The ideological representation of imaginative expressions, quotations and emotive words are generally meant for creating change and suspicion in the mind of the reader to believe in the writer's ideological viewpoints.
- (v) According to the research findings, there is a hidden agenda with regards to the use of imagery, selective quotes and emotional expressions which created so many things in the mind of the

readers. Most articles dealing with political and security issues employed the use of the selected variables to create suspicion, hatred, regional bias, religious and social sentiments. Articles dealing health issue especially if it talks about diseases are sometimes objective. Those talking about the provision of health facilities are sometimes subjective, portraying writers' view point about the government commitment or otherwise (opposition or ruling party).

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the data gathered, the paper investigates and finds that most use of the selected variables used in the feature articles are subjective. The stories depict the ideological stance of the feature article writers. Most articles dealing with political issues shows regional loyalty and interest. Articles dealing with security issues are biased in nature depending on the ideological orientation of the newspaper in question. Quotations on health issues are meant to authenticate claims and findings. Both newspapers have a similar pattern of production. The ideological representation of the use of the imagery, selective quotes and imaginative expressions is embedded in the lexical choices and quotations which are interpreted using Fairclough's three- part model of critical discourse analysis with much emphasis on interpretation and Van Djick's analysis of "text and talk".

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