LANGUAGE, IDEOLOGY AND REPORTAGE ON MUTUALITY IN A PLURALISTIC WORLD

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ABSTRACT: *This paper observes that most discourses in a multilingual setting tend to be ideologically based. Using the multi-ethnic Nigerian situation as reference point, the study explores the ideological nature of reportage in selected newspaper headlines with a view to examining how the structures of media discourse are influenced by the structures of ideologies. The Triangulated Discourse Analytical Approach of Teun Van Dijk was adapted as the theoretical framework for the study. Twenty headlines, characterized by social properties of ideologies such as activity, perspective, rhetorical form, goal, resource and so on are purposively selected from five different Nigerian newspapers, formed the data which were content-analyzed. The surface structure of the newspaper headlines contained ideologies and belief system of the writers which were not overtly expressed but located in the linguistic expressions that characterized the selected newspaper headlines. The nature of language in the newspaper headlines indicate that the writers conceal their opinions in linguistic forms in order to create persuasion for ideological support.*

KEYWORDS: Language, Ideology, Reportage, Media Discourse, News Story

INTRODUCTION

The motivation that drives people to invest personal time into the dissemination of news might not be mainly for public satisfaction. In fact, there are other considerations that underlie reportage, which may not exclude ideological orientations and other hidden drives. Using Nigeria's diverse linguistic landscape as a reference point, we move to examine the purported neutrality of the media in the news stories that they publish. This decision to investigate media practitioners is borne out of Wodak and Busch's (2004) observation that virtually all media institutions claim that they merely provide space for public discourse and reflect state of affairs disinterestedly.

Many studies in language (Fairclough, 2009; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Van Dijk 1995a, 1988a and 1988b), no doubt, have proved the media practitioners' claim to the contrary. We observe, however, that most of the investigations, coupled with the linguistic approaches employed, appear to be focusing largely on the moment of the text, that is, the news story. In other words, the news story seems to have received more attention of analysts than the other component of the news (text) production. Perhaps, this is why Wodak and Busch (2004:107) suggest a deviation from the approach that benefits the news genre only. They argue that the news genre has been the main beneficiary of research focus, especially of linguistic approaches that employ critical discourse analytical framework in media research.

The other component of news text production that is disadvantaged in this circumstance has been the process involved in producing the news text. According to Jimoh (2012), these two key components (news story and news production process) usually constitute the discourse of the news media.

Our contention in this work is that factors in the process of news text production can also influence and determine news discourse. According to Chimombo and Roseberry (1988:40), factors that usually define the production of news text include participants of the news discourse. These participatory factors may be human (recipients of the news) or ideological (the news producers' angle of reporting). We posit that the ideologies of the news producers play crucial role in the manner at which the news is reported. This is perhaps what Chimombo and Roseberry claim as some of the factors responsible for 'staging' and 'monitoring' in media discourse. The major thrust of the current work is to establish how ideological orientations of the news text producers are overtly or covertly deployed to exercise control over the discourse and perhaps with the tendency to manipulate the intended recipient of the news text. This hypothesis is predicated on the conclusion of van Dijk (1988a) that the language of the mass media is a site of power and social struggle as well as a place where ideological orientation is apparently conspicuous.

The mass media, in this context, traditionally involves all the people in this organisation that provide information and news to the public, including television, radio and newspapers, which have been described as the Old Media (Chimombo and Roseberry, 1988:308) as against the New Media that defines a range of technological innovations from telephone, email, fax, photograph, laser print to the internet. However, the scope of this current paper has been restricted to the newspaper headlines, which fall under the old media. The decision to delimit the scope of the study is not only due to the limited space allowed in a study like this, but also because newspaper headlines are readily available to the people, either through the regular Newspapers Review on radio every morning (which millions of people in Nigeria cannot afford to miss) or free reading of newspaper headlines allowed by vendors in every News Stand in the country.

It has been observed that millions of people in Nigeria stay glued to radio, every morning to listen to the Newspaper Review and people from different walks of life troop to the News Stands in Nigeria to read newspaper headlines every day. The reason may be because 'Radio' is what unemployment, hunger and poverty can afford the common man in Nigeria. It is a splendid legacy bequeathed by the old media, and regardless of the country's epileptic nature of power supply, what is just needed to keep this old inheritance perpetually running is two pieces of batteries that can readily be recharged by the sun, even when they have become exhausted over long period of use. Secondly, where radio is unaffordable (in the case of extreme poverty), the News Stands have been so magnanimous that they allow everybody to freely read the newspaper headlines as long as such individual promises not to roughen or dismember the paper, for the designated buyers (usually, the bourgeoisie).

Having noticed the regular rush of people for newspapers, prompted by the headlines every morning, it just behoves on the (newspaper) proprietors to simply tinge their news stories with sensationalism in order to attract more audience. What this implies is that if something does not exist to be fed in by the media as news story, then it can be made up or speculated, as long as people do not show serious concern about the source or credibility of any news story. This attempt by the newspaper producers to sway news consumers to (their) own side of viewpoint, using the instrumentality of language, as projected by sensational headlines, as a foil to achieve

socio-political and ideological goals, has attracted the attention of this paper. However, before this ideological manipulation of the readers is exposed, let us briefly examine what is meant by ideology and how the phenomenon is embedded in language in the news.

IDEOLOGY AND LANGUAGE IN THE MEDIA

Language has had a long relationship with ideology. In fact, Fowler (1991:1) confirms the assertion that language is an issue or a means to achieve socio-political goals. His investigation of the language of the news reveals the fact that language plays a key role in the construction of ideas in the press. According to him, language is a highly constructive mediator in the press, as it not only reflects social reality, it also intervenes in the social construction of reality.

Fowler's observation clearly aligns with the conclusion of Fairclough (1989:45) that language connects with the social, by being the primary domain of ideology as well as being involved in the expression of power relations. This interconnection of language and ideology is re-echoed in the submission of Jimoh (2012) which sees language as epitomizing ideology. He argues that putting a line between language and ideology is not only unnecessary but a fruitless effort as both concepts are two different ways of perceiving the same phenomenon. Scholars that have attempted to separate ideology and language have discovered that the two concepts are so nebulous that no single definition can claim complete explicitness, as long as the two concepts remain amorphous and prone to different interpretations. For instance, some scholars (Marx and Engels, 1943: Berger and Luckman 1976; Fowler, 1991; Eagleton, 1984 and Uwasomba, 2007) believe language is ideology and ideology is language, as long as language is perceived as social practice through which its use becomes effective in the construction and reproduction of ideology. Their conclusion is that the existence of language signifies the existence of a culture, and that labelled objects in a culture become significant to the existence and functioning within the culture. In other words, an existing ideology presupposes and determines the signification system that is used by all members in the culture.

However, to van Dijk (1995b:18), ideology is the mentally represented basic social characteristic of a group, manifesting in self-serving selection of values, positions, identity, tasks, goals, norms and so on by the group and group members, for use in their discourses. Van Dijk equally observes that feminist attitudes, for instance, are internally structured and mutually related by general principles that together define the feminist ideology. A structural analysis of the feminist ideology will, for instance, reveal the fact that the group (feminist) selects and attaches special importance to such values as 'independence', 'autonomy' and 'gender equality', the way racist focuses on 'self identity', 'superiority of own group' (emphasizing inequality) and 'primacy of own group' (stressing self-importance).

Ideologies, in this manner, control evaluative beliefs or social opinions shared by members of a group, which also reflect in their text productions or discourses. It is in this perspective that this paper examines opinions and ideologies in the Nigerian press, using the newspaper headlines as a reference point, with a view to confirming or refuting the claim of Wetschanow (2003), which describes the language of reporting in the media as biased, stereotypical and a product of prejudices, a conclusion that was based on his investigation of the manner of reporting violence against women in the Austrian print media.

Ideologies in the press are projected through language. Osundare (1995) observes that language can be used to oppress, imprison, dehumanize, demarcate, demean and exclude. It can also be the foster father of privilege and a weapon for sentencing the non-privileged to silence. Jimoh (2012) claims that language has been used to justify conventional warfare, underpin the psychology of combatants and explain some apparently bizarre forms of atrocities by the media, especially in conflict situation. This undeniable power of language in almost all human endeavours has prompted our investigation of language used by the media to sway people into agreeing with certain viewpoints expressed by the headlines and how such conscientisation can impact on the desired mutuality in a pluralistic world like Nigeria. At this juncture, let us examine Nigeria's socio-political space with regard to the communication of information and news to the populace, with a view to finding out the general motivation for news in Nigeria.

Motivations for news in Nigeria

As observed in our introduction, the process of media text production, including the norms and routines of the community of news practitioners, has not been enjoying the kind of attention given to its counterpart, the news story. This is an area that concerns us greatly in this work. We contend that the process involved in producing the news text is influenced by the prevailing ideological circumstances in such community. The circumstances may include the need to 'conscientize', 'ideologize' or 'orientate' the people towards certain position, belief, norms and values desired or acceptable in the socio-cultural enclave.

A medium is what transforms experience into knowledge and language is one of the semiotic devices that are required by the news text producers to provide the means through which signs give meaning to the events of everyday life. According to Anderson (1997:39) 'news' is a commodity that everyone wants. This is why we believe that the news discourse must have derived its strength and popularity from this general craze (or thirst) for news. However, news, according to Anderson, is such a commodity that grows old and goes bad immediately there is some new information.

The need to remain relevant and keep afloat may thus pose a critical challenge to the news producer. This is where capitalism, the politico-economic ideology creeps in. we should therefore not be amazed at seeing newspaper in their insatiable search for attention grabbing stories to be projected in 'screaming' headlines. This is the way a vendor would scream his/her article in Nigeria to attract customers. For capitalist ideology, economic interest seems natural, as long as such profits keep the business running. However, the concern of this work is when the news proprietors embellish their news stories with ideological propaganda with a view to manipulating both the audience and the reality, even while disguising behind the airs of neutrality. In other words, we are interested in how economic challenges, as well as other ideological standpoints such as reformism, ethnocentrism and hate preaching govern the selection of news item, which are also used as building blocks for self-construction of ideologies in the news media.

Understanding the true picture (or motives) of the news proprietors, through understanding the ideological nature of rhetoric in the newspaper headlines, which arguably culminate in sensationalism and 'screaming' headlines, will tremendously allows us to comprehend the role of the media in the social process, especially in the Nigerian context, where conflict, agitation, insurgency and so on are currently plaguing the country. In Nigeria, for instance, the manner of reporting internal conflicts, especially insurgency in the North East of the country by the print media, has perhaps pitched them on collision course with the Nigerian military. It was

reported in the electronic media that a large number of copies, running into millions, of Nigerian newspapers were seized and destroyed by the Nigerian military, sometimes in May, 2014 (Channels TV). This seizures, confiscation and destruction of newspapers by the military, although condemned by the newspaper proprietors, seems to be continuing till date, especially within the Federal Capital Territory, and this has been part of the motivation for the current study. Apart from investigating what makes languages in the news become a source of conflict, the study seeks to establish that language in the news encapsulates hidden ideologies that are probably deployed to create strong persuasion for readers' support of expressed viewpoints.

In tackling these issues, four items (ABCD) were purposively selected from five different newspapers in Nigeria: Nigeria Tribune (NT); The Guardian (TG); The Punch (TP); Saturday Tribune (ST) and Sunday Punch (SP). Their initials (enclosed in brackets) are used as reference points in the course of the analysis. The focus of the analysis is on the manner at which the four items were ideologically projected by the headlines of the selected newspapers. Using the insight offered by Critical Discourse Analytical approach of Fowler (1991), as expounded by Van Dijk (1995a&b), each headlines is content-analysed.

The selected headlines are presented below in tables that contain the issues which informed them.

Table 1. Impeachment of Adamawa State governor

1	**NT**: Fresh Controversy trails Adamawa Impeachment
2	**TG**: Nyako, Deputy, Flee Government House!
3	**TP**: IMPEACHMENT: PDP, APC CLASH OVER NYAKO
4	**ST**: IMPEACHMENT APC fights back!
5	**SD**: Buhari : Jonathan has declared war on Nigeria

Table 2: Resource control/derivation formula as being discussed in the National Conference

1	**ST**: Battle for Nigeria: North launches attack Monday
2	**TP**: Protest, as consensus group okays 18 percent derivation
3	**SP**: Confab threatened consensus group splits
4	**NT**: Statement in Confab over derivation formular
5	**TG**: North plots to scuttle Confab Report at National Assembly

Table 3: Federal Government's plan to borrow money for war on terrorism

1	**NT**: Jonathan seeks $1bn to fight Boko Haram
2	**TG**:Jonathan seeks Senate's nod to borrow ₦150bn over insurgency
3	**SP**: Danjuma: War against sect taking too long as FG seeks 1bn Dollars to fight insurgency

Table 4. Meeting between parents of the abducted 'Chibok' girls and the Nigerian President

1	NT: What Jonathan, Chibok girls discussed
2	TG: Jonathan meets with Escapees, Parents of Chibok girls
3	TP: Tears as escaped Chibok Girls, Parents meet with Jonathan

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

According to Van Dijk (1995b:1), ideological analysis involves examining what ideologies are typically associated with certain position and how linguistic devices are deployed to defend or legitimate such position by discourse. He stresses further that in order to carry out effective ideological analysis, the analyst is expected to identify what discourse production processes are involved in expressing positions and how mental models allow personal experiences or opinions, which combine with context constraints to reproduce discourse. These mental models are usually exercised in six descriptive ways: self-identity descriptions; activity descriptions; norm and value descriptions; goal descriptions, position and relation description and resource description. All these form the contextual focus of the analysis in this work. The tables will be analysed in turns A,B,C and D.

Analysis of ideological elements in Table 1

Activity: Impeachment of Adamawa State Governor

Perspective: **NT:** turbulence

                          TG: chaos

                          TP: clash

                          ST: fight

                          SP: war

Rhetorical form: Manipulation and persuasion

Goal: To conscientize the reader into rejecting the impeachment process

Resource: New story headlines

Keywords: controversy, flee, clash, fight, war

Discussion: Table 1 describes the perspective with which the reporters want the reader to consider the impeachment of Adamawa State Governor, that is, faulting the process as well as the outcome. There is clear tendency to play down the offence committed by the governor (if any) as no mention is made of it. The goal is to persuade the reader to see the impeachment of the governor as politically motivated. It may also be to persuade him/her into believing that democracy in Nigeria is fraught with turbulence, chaos, clashes, fight and war.

Analysis of ideological elements in Table 2

Activities:	Issue of Resource Control in Nigeria
Perspective:	**TP:** cynicism **SP:** scepticism, **ST:** division:
	NT: impossibility **TG:** quarrel
Rhetorical form:	Manipulation and dissuasion
Goal:	To make the reader believe the issue may split the country
Resources:	New story headlines
Keywords:	battle, protest, threat, stalemate, plot

Discussion: Table 2 describes the position of the news producers, vis-à-vis the prevailing ideology of cynicism and scepticism over the derivation formula in the country. The reporters, pretending to express the opinion of the people, are rejecting the idea of Resource Control and speculating that the result, or consequences of adopting the proposal would be 'battle', 'division', 'stalemate' and 'chaos'. This position/ perspective is however disguised by attributing it to the act of the participants at the organized National Conference Debate (CONFAB) through ideological technique of self-effacing.

Analysis of ideological elements in Table 3

Activity:	Federal Government's plan to borrow money to fight terrorism
Perspective:	**NT:** cynicism
	TG: extravagance
	SP: despair
Rhetorical form:	Personalising, exaggeration, pathos
Goal:	to dissuade FG and persuade readers for ideological support of own's
	Perspective, which is to scuttle the planned borrowing
Resources:	New story headlines
Keywords:	Jonathan, seek, borrow, dollars, Naira, billions

Discussion: Table 3 expresses serious condemnation of the plan by the Federal Government to borrow money to fight insurgency. By attributing the intention to borrow to 'Jonathan' (Personalising) as against 'Federal Government of Nigeria', the reporters are merely saying the act is a one man (personal) decision. Reporting in this manner makes the reader suspect that, if this is the case, then there is a hidden (or surreptitious) purpose for borrowing (such a huge amount), other than the purpose that is stated, hence, may be agreeing with the viewpoint suggested by the publication.

Analysis of ideological element in Table 4

Activity:	Meeting between Nigerian President and parents of the abducted 'Chibok' girls
Perspective:	**NT:** Economic **TG:** cynicism **TP:** pathos
Rhetorical form:	suspense, cynicism, pathos
Goal: abducted	To let the reader doubt the sincerity of FG over the rescue of the 'Chibok' girls
Resource:	New story headlines
Key words:	Jonathan, Chibok girls, tears, parents

Discussion: By creating suspense through the headline, the NT intends to arouse the curiosity of the reader, and probably compel him/her to buy the newspaper, as he/she may desire to know "what Jonathan and Chibok girls discussed", which is assumed to be the real news story behind the headline as contained within the newspaper. In that case, greed and politico-economic ideology must have informed the suspense. By personalising, the headlines intend to single out or isolate 'Jonathan' (the President) for blame, as the position of the headline seems to be that such meeting is belated, hence doubting the sincerity in such belated act. The headline also wants the reader to assume such perspective. However, TP intends to whip up emotion of the reader through the other headline. This is an ideological technique of pathos, designed to sway the reader to own side of argument.

CONCLUSION

In this work, we have demonstrated that a newspaper headline contains linguistic as well as ideological information encoded by media practitioners in their bid to communicate ideas feeling or information to the public. The purpose of this critical discourse analysis is to enable the reader to recognise the intended goal of the media, especially the news print, and thus achieve some measure of control over the discourse. The understanding that may be gained in this process helps to equalize the power relationship between the writer and the reader, so that there is an escape from the role of victim.

The objective of this work has been to illustrate how headlines may embody ideological posturing by creating awareness on the part of the reader. We argued that the news producers are conscious of the fact that the largest news audience in Nigeria gravitate to headlines as alternative to newspapers that are so expensive that they become unaffordable for the common man. So far, the study has revealed that the language in reportage can be regarded as 'accomplice' in the manipulation of both the audience and reality. The manner of reporting has been proved as serving the best interest of the headline producers. Such manipulation of the people, we opine, could impact negatively on the fragile peace and nascent mutuality in a pluralistic environment such as Nigeria. We therefore suggest that the newspaper headline

readers should at all time read between the lines in order to escape from being the victim of manipulation.

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