

Language, Ideology and Power Relations in Nigerian Newspaper Headlines.

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Abstract

This study is a Critical Discourse Analysis of Nigerian newspaper headlines. Three hundred Nigerian newspaper headlines were randomly selected from six Nigerian newspapers and they were examined for peculiarity in the vocabulary and rhetorical devices used in order to identify the ideologies that lie behind their constructions. The study generated two typologies of headlines based on the theme addressed and the surface structures. A critical study of the headlines revealed that the headlines have hidden ideological meanings, being divided along some ideological lines reflecting the views of those whose interest is being served and those whose interest is being undermined. The study concludes that headlines are emotion-inducing strategy in the hands of the editor used to initiate, sustain discourse and shape the views of the readers on national issues.

1. Introduction.

Linguists' interest in discourse in recent times is gradually shifting from the traditional focus on the linguistic structure of text to how texts figure in the social process. An understanding of grammar, morphology, semantics and phonology of a text does not necessarily constitute understanding of the text. The rhetoric intent, the coherence and the worldview that the author and receptor bring to the text are equally essential (Kaplan, 1990). Language, therefore, is no longer seen as merely reflecting our reality, but as central to creating reality. Our words are never neutral, they carry the power that reflects the interests of those who speak or write (see Fiske, 1994; Fowler, et.al., 1979).

Opinion leaders, courts, government, newspaper editors, *etc*, play a crucial role in shaping issues in the society and setting the boundaries of what is talked about and how it is talked about (Henry and Tator, 2002). Newspapers are particularly known to lead in the initiation of discourse on key national issues by picking on statements and actions of prominent national figures, celebrities and happenings around the nation and exposing them to their readership. The initiation, advancement and sustenance of discourse by

newspapers are not often devoid of some embellishments, determined by their own angle of the story.

This paper is an attempt to look at how language is used in news tabloids, particularly in headlines to reflect specific societal ideologies and power relations. The role headlines play as precursors to the news makes them to be constructed in such a way that they usually evoke readers' emotions. Most editors ensure that the choice of expressions in headlines reflects the feelings, opinions and attitudes of people about issues in the news.

2. Critical Discourse Analysis.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a method of Discourse Analysis that reveals the way discourses are used everyday for signification, power relations and development of new knowledge. Words, whether spoken or written have power (see Luke, 1997). CDA is concerned with studying and analysing words used in discourses to reveal the source of power, abuse, dominance, inequality and bias and how these sources are initiated, maintained, reproduced and transformed within specific social, economic, political and historical contexts (Van Dijk, 1988).

This approach is often called "critical linguistics" 'an interdisciplinary approach to language study with critical point of view for the purpose of studying language behaviour in natural speech situations of social relevance' (Wodak, 1989).

Fairclough (2000) identifies three central tenets of CDA namely: social structure (class, status, age, ethnic identity and gender); culture (the generally accepted norms of behaviour in the society); and discourse (the words we use). The goal of CDA is to determine the relationship between these three central tenets. Our discourses reflect the societal norms and beliefs, *ie*, we say things in conformity with the way they should normally be said in our society, and there are certain things we do not say because the society has constrained us not to say them. Likewise, our identity in the social structure is shown in the way we think, act and speak. A text is a record of communication, which involves the presentation of facts, beliefs and the construction of identities of participants. It is produced by socially-situated speakers. It is therefore more than just words spoken or written on the pages of books, but how such words are used in particular social context

(Huckin, 1997). McGregor (2003) identifies an aspect of CDA, which she calls the “discursive practices”. These are rules, norms and mental models of socially acceptable behaviour in specific roles or relationships used to produce, receive, and interpret the message. Discursive practices then, are the processes involved in speaking, writing, hearing and reading texts.

One domain of discourse to which CDA has been applied so much in recent times is the media. The critical use of Discourse Analysis in Applied Linguistics is leading to the development of a different approach to understanding media messages (Kaplan, 1990). Some of the CDA researches carried out on the media include: the roles news reports play in ethnic relations (van Dijk, 1991); how news reports are used to serve the interest of the dominant forces in the society (McGregor, 2003); how journalists adopt particular ideological-discursive structure to express the values of an ideological system (Kress, 1990); and how mental illnesses are portrayed in the media (Greg, 1996). Most of the earlier studies address the content of news reports.

This study examines the headlines of some Nigerian newspapers and the social contexts from which they emerge and identifies the various uses editors make of the linguistic resources to portray the various existing societal ideological postures and power relations.

3. Language and Ideology in the Mass Media.

The basic claim of CDA is that all human usage encodes ideological patterns, *ie*, language is not just a transparent medium of communication about the objective world, but a constantly operative part of the social process (see Malkmkjaer, 1991: 89). CDA therefore, analyses discourse to find the hidden meanings (McGregor, 2003). In most interactions, users bring with them different dispositions towards language, which are closely related to their social positioning. Kress (1990) stresses that the defined and delimited set of statements that constitute a discourse are themselves expressive of, and organised by a specific ideology. Language, therefore, can never appear by itself - it always appears as the representative of a system of linguistic terms, which themselves reflect the prevailing discursive and ideological systems.

Ideology is used in many disciplines with different, but overlapping shades of meaning. Our task in this paper however, is to define the term within the context of its relevance to language use. Ideology simply refers to attitudes, set of beliefs, values and doctrines with reference to religious, political, social and economic life, which shape the individual's and group's perception and through which reality is constructed and interpreted.

No news report is ideologically neutral, transparent or 'innocent'. According to Olowe (1993),

the editor and his reporters on the one 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

(p.8)

Regular aspects of media messages such as news reports, headlines, advertisements, editorials, features, *etc* are often subjected to linguistic manipulations. News reporters, editors, copywriters and feature writers work on societal values, conception of the world and symbolic systems in order to create their messages.

Olowe (1993) looks at the interplay of language and ideology in Nigerian English-medium newspapers. Focusing on editorials, on nationally important issues of religion, labour relations and politics, Olowe identified the various linguistic devices used by these newspapers in projecting their ideological viewpoints, such as thematization, pasivization and nominalization.

Though this present study examines language and ideology, they are being examined in the context of newspaper headlines. Sometimes, they draw attention to some prevailing societal issues such as power imbalance, social inequalities, non-democratic practices and other injustices. For instance, the view of many Nigerians is that the President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo is authoritarian and that there is a carry-over of his military background that believes in force into governance in a democratic setting. This is often reinforced by the Nigerian press through their headlines, *eg*:

H1. Another Fuel Hike: Is Obasanjo a sadist?

Nigerian Tribune June 9, 2004 (p.6)

H2 Obasanjo rejects National Confab

The Guardian May 11, 2004 (p.2)

H3. Obasanjo must calm down to succeed

Sunday Punch August 22, 2004 (p. 6)

H4. Fuel Price : FG Adamant

This Day June 5, 2004 (front page)

The ideological postures in these headlines selected from four different national newspapers, portray the president as unyielding, authoritarian and insensitive to the plight of the people. This appears like some ordinary men on the street are saying. The choice of words such as *sadist* (H1), *reject* (H2), *calm down* (H3), and *adamant* (H4) clearly paints the picture of who people think Obasanjo is.

4, Newspaper Headlines.

Newspaper headlines act as forerunners to news reports. They particularly, reveal the social, cultural and national representations circulating in a society at any given time. They reach an audience considerably wider than those who read the news story. As vendors display their newspapers, several people, including passersby and casual readers are able to have a glimpse of the headlines, which may later become the subject of discussion in their offices, at home or any other domain. This is particularly true of front-page headlines, which are more carefully chosen to evoke some emotions in the reader. Newspaper editors deliberately go for eye-catching expressions. According to Taiwo (2004: 324), headlines are strategically used by the editor, who chooses emotive vocabulary, rhetorical and graphological devices to make an impact on the readership.

Newspaper headlines are rich source of information about the field of cultural reference and they can be sometimes difficult to understand especially when the reader cannot recognise the field, allusions, issues and cultural references necessary to decode the content. The reader must understand enough about what has been going on recently in

the setting of the news, *ie*, the reality that is assumed to be widespread in the society at that particular time. For instance, let us consider the following headlines from our corpus:

H5. Victory against Polio

Tell August 9, 2004 (p. 51)

H6. Okija: Confusion over Register

... as more priests go underground

Sunday Punch August 15, 2004 (p. 9)

H7. IBB speaks on June 12

SORRY MY FOOT!

Daily Sun August 26, 2004 (front page)

H8. SNC, No Task for N/Assembly - Enahoro

This Day June 3, 2004 (p.2)

The headlines above presuppose certain stock of knowledge and anybody who is not familiar with the field of cultural references will not be able to decode the messages. For instance, it takes a person who has been following the politics of polio vaccine in the northern part of Nigeria to understand H5. A national health policy seeking to eradicate polio in the northern Nigeria, where it is most rampant, was viewed with suspicion by the beneficiaries. Through political mischief, some religious leaders in the north made the common man in the north to believe that the polio vaccine contained anti-fertility agents and that it causes HIV/AIDS. They were also made to believe that the vaccine is part of the Western plot to depopulate the Nigerian moslems. This, of course, has an historical background. The religious setting in the country is that in which the North is largely dominated by moslems, while the South by Christian. Several issues are naturally woven around this dichotomy, which could precipitate religious riots at the slightest opportunity. Northern religious leaders are also quick to interpret any move that is not in the interest of moslems as part of the Western agenda to undermine Islam. This makes every move by a southerner in government to be viewed against this background of political rivalry between the north and the south.

For H6 and H7, some forms of national identification are used, for instance, references to specific historical events, *eg, June 12* (H7); reference to locally-coined acronyms, such as *IBB* (H.7), *SNC* (H.6); the use of presupposed elements of discourse, such as *Okija* (H.6). To decode H.6, the reader needs to know what *Okija* signifies and what is the connection between *register, Okija* and *priest*. The reader is expected to know these presupposed items and the connection between them. The press is particularly known to use a lot of these references and presuppositions. Some others acronyms or terms commonly used in Nigerian newspaper headlines are:

Coined Acronyms: *OBJ* (Obasanjo); *OGD* (Otunba Gbenga Daniel); *SFG* (Secretary to the Government) *FG* (Federal Government); *IGP* (Inspector General of Police)

Historical Events: *June 12, Orkar Coup, Biafran War, etc.*

Presupposed Elements: *2007, Reform, fuel price, Kano, cultism, etc.*

Historical events and presupposed elements are often used as pointers in headlines, as we shall soon see in the paper.

5. METHODOLOGY

The corpus for this work consists of 300 headlines collected from six Nigerian newspapers. These papers were published between March and August 2004. Four of the papers were daily newspapers (*The Sun, Nigerian Tribune, This Day, and The Guardian*), while two were weekly newspapers (*Tell* and *Newswatch*).

The headlines were placed into two categories according to the issues addressed and according to their surface structures. We also did a critical study of the headlines to identify their ideological leanings and how they reflect power play within the Nigerian society especially between those whose interest is being served and those whose interest is being undermined. Below are the categories of headlines.

Thematic Classification of Headlines

1. Headlines on Communal/Religious Crises

Nigeria faces a lot of problems associated with her multi-cultural multi-religious and multi-ethnic nature. Hundred of lives are lost to ethnic and religious conflicts from time

to time. Whenever these crises occur, they naturally attract the attention of pressmen, who present them from different ideological viewpoints in their headlines. Two major religious riots that were widely reported occurred within the period of our data collection: the Kano and Plateau riots. Likewise, incessant communal riots were widely reported at different parts of the country: the Niger Delta, Benue and Jos. Below are some of the headlines on these crises.

(a) Communal Crises

H9. Fresh Crisis erupts in Benue town, houses torched

The Guardian on Sunday May 2, 2004 (p.17)

H9. Fresh Strife in Ogoni, 15 Houses razed

The Guardian March 31, 2004 (p.4)

(b) Religious Riots

H10. Again, Kano Explodes

Sunday Punch May 16, 2004 (p.7)

H11. Terror in Kano as Hoodlums plan showdown

Sunday Tribune May 15, 2004 (front page)

2. Headlines on Petroleum Issues

Petroleum is the major source of income for Nigeria. It is a constant focus of discussion on daily basis in most domains of discourse. Since the economy of the country depends largely on it, issues that surround its pricing both at the local and the international markets are naturally of concern to an average Nigerian. The press knows the importance of petroleum in the life of Nigerians and they always present captivating headlines on it, *eg*:

H12. Fuel Hike: This Insult can't stand

Saturday Tribune June 5, 2004 (front page)

H13. Fuel Price: NLC issues ultimatum to Govt

The Guardian May 30, 2004 (front page)

3. Headlines on Corruption and Crime

Crime is a subject that attracts the attention of the press anywhere in the world. Stories on crime usually find ready columns in the front pages of newspapers. The recent crusade of the government against corruption makes it a regular thing being addressed in headlines. Four subcategories of headlines on crime and corruption are identified and they exemplified below.

(a) Headlines on Corruption

H14. This Govt rewards Corrupt People, says Oshiomole

This Day August 11, 2004 (p.2)

H15. World Bank, IDB say Need to do more to fight corruption

This Day May 26, 2004 (p.25)

(b) Headlines on Robbery/Theft/Fraud

H. 16. Robbers kill 2, injure one in Benin

The Guardian May 25, 2004 (p.4)

H17. American Lands in 'wash wash' scam, loses \$2m to Nigerian fraudsters

Sunday Sun August 29, 2004

(c) Headlines on Human Rights Violations

H17. Human Trafficking Thrives in Lagos

The Guardian July 25, 2004 (p.6)

H18. Women Trafficking: Nigeria on US Watch

This Day August 11, 2004 (p.14)

(c) **Headlines on Assassinations and Cultism**

H19. A litany of Violence and Political Assassinations

Newswatch March 17, 2004 (p.32)

H20. Cultists Threaten Deputy Speaker

This Day May 15, 2004 (p.10)

4 Headline on Health Issues

In recent times, with the concern the government is showing on the health sector, matters concerned with people's health became very important and newsworthy. Such matters include drug peddling, drug abuse and fake drugs. The recent 'revolution' in the National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration (NAFDAC) brought about by Dora Akunyili, particularly draws attention to fake products. Other health issues that attract attention during the period of this research coverage are some diseases that increase mortality rate in the country, such as polio, HIV/AIDS, meningitis and malaria. Examples of headlines that address these issues are given below:

(a) **Headlines on Polio**

H21. Again, the politics of polio vaccine

Sunday Punch May 7, 2004 (p.19)

H23. Mass Turn out as Bauchi begins Polio Vaccination

The Guardian March 29, 2004 (p.5)

(b) Headlines on Fake Drugs/Drug Abuse/Drug Peddling

H23. NAFDAC alerts on Toxic Toothpaste

The Guardian May 30, 2004 (p.14)

H24. 1695 Drug Suspects Awaiting Trial - NDLEA

Saturday Punch August 21, 2004 (p.100)

(c) Headlines on HIV/AIDS

H27. HIV now WMD in Nigeria

This Day May 26, 2004 (p. 2)

H28. Stigmatisation of people with HIV unhelpful, says Red Cross

The Guardian May 11, 2004 (p.20)

(d) Headlines on Other Diseases

H29. Meningitis claims 407 lives

This Day May 26, 2004

H30. Don seeks Aid for Sickle Cell Patients

This Day August 13, 2004 (p.7)

5. Headlines on Politics

Since Nigeria's return to democratic rule on May 29, 1999, political issues have taken the front burner in the Nigerian press. These include the June 12 issue and the man at the

centre of it all, the dividends of democracy, power shift/rotational presidency, political reforms, 2007 elections, Sovereign National Conference, *etc.* These issues are particularly newsworthy because they bother on the current political setting and how the key players involved demonstrate power play. The headlines on politics, which is the largest in number in our data is divided into five categories based on the topics addressed.

(a) Headlines on IBB and June 12

H31. IBB speaks on June 12
SORRY MY FOOT!

Daily Sun August 26, 2004 (front page)

H32. Soyinka asks IBB to apologise on June 12

The Guardian July 28, 2004 (front page)

(b) Headlines on IBB and 2007

H33. 2007: Campaigners affirm IBB's readiness

This Day May 18, 2004 (p.4)

H.34. Yoruba 'll reject IBB - Fasehun

This Day August 6, 2004 (p.27)

(c) Headlines on Power Shift and Rotational Presidency

H35. Makarfi insists on Northern President

The Guardian May 14, 2004 (back page)

H36. 2007 Presidency: Arewa vs Ohaneze, No Retreat, No Surrender

Sunday Sun February 1, 2004 (p.11)

(d) Headlines on Government's Reforms

H37. No going back on Labour Reforms - Minister

This Day August 13 2004 (p.6)

H38. Civil Service is committed to Reforms - HOS

This Day August 13, 2004 (p.3)

(e) Headlines on Sovereign National Conference

H. 39. Obasanjo rejects National Confab

The Guardian may 11, 2004 (p.2)

H40. SNC Not solution to our problems - Daniel

This Day May 25, 2004 (p.3)

6. Headlines on Education

Several issues bothering on the educational sector have also attracted the attention of the press. These range from corrupt practices such as examination malpractice, indecent dressing among students and sexual harassment to other issues such as funding.

H41. UNAAB bans indecent dressing

Nigerian Tribune July 23, 2004 (back page)

H42. VCs urge adequate funding of Varsities

The Guardian July 28, 2004 (p.7)

7. Headlines on Labour Matters

Labour disputes have been quite rampant in the country. The labour unions are always at loggerheads with their employers on salary payment and deductions made from their salaries. The central labour union the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) from time to time leads workers' union to national strikes, usually on issues that bother on petroleum price hike. This is usually met with stiff resistance from the government, knowing the implications on the nation's economy.

H43. NLC orders strike, Mass Action

This Day June 9, 2004 (front page)

H44. Police set for Battle

Sunday Punch August 22, 2004 (p.9)

Below is Table1 showing the categorisation of the headlines according to the issues addressed.

Table 1: Classification of Headlines According to the Issues Addressed

TYPE OF HEADLINE	NO	%
Headlines on Petroleum-related Issues	35	11.66
Headlines on Crime and Corruption	36	12.00
Headlines on Communal and Religious Crises	69	23.00
Headlines on Corruption and Crime	28	9.33
Headlines on Labour Matters	17	5.67
Headlines on Politics	93	31.00
Headlines on Education	32	10.67
TOTAL	300	

The headlines were also categorised according to their surface structure into 4 major types: Each of these types are discussed briefly.

Surface Structural Categorization

1. Plain Headlines

These are headlines that express a single idea or more. They are couched in simple statements and they often use distinct and short words, usually monosyllabic, *eg*:

H45. NANS vows to expose cult backers

The Guardian May 30, 2004 (p.6)

H46. Religious Bodies declare war on AIDS

This Day August 11, 2004 (p.8)

2. Speech as Headline

This type of headline uses either direct or reported speech of a person and the name is put in front to show the person who made the statement, *eg*:

H47. I am ready to reconcile with Uba - Ngige

This Day June 22, 2004 (front page)

H48. We're not disciplined in PDP - Obasanjo

Nigeria Tribune June 9, 2004 (front page)

3. Headlines with Pointer

These are headlines that have one or more words that create in the reader the awareness of the context in which the comments that follow are being made. There are two parts to the headline – the given information and the comment that follows (see Taiwo, 2004: 326).

H49. Fuel Price: NLC issues Ultimatum to Govt.

The Guardian May 25, 2004 (front page)

H50. Plateau: 2 Killed, 20 Houses razed in fresh fighting

This Day August 6, 2004 (front page)

4. Question as Headlines

These are headlines couched in form of questions meant to arouse the readers' emotion about the issue addressed.

H51. Another Fuel Price Hike. Is Obasanjo a Sadist?

Nigerian Tribune June 9, 2004 (p.6)

H52. Who benefits from Rising oil Prices?

This Day May 18, 2004 (p.29)

Below is a table showing the types of headlines according to their surface structure.

Table 2: Categorisation of Headlines According to Surface Structure

TYPE OF HEADLINE	NO	%
Plain Headlines	147	49.00
Speech as Headlines	97	32.33
Headlines with Pointers	47	15.67
Question as Headlines	09	3.00
TOTAL	300	

The table above shows a preponderance of Plain Headlines (147: 49%) and this is followed by Speech as Headlines (97: 32.33%). The least used category is Question as Headlines (09: 3%). Plain Headlines are conventional and equally short. This justifies why editors have preference for them. The conciseness satisfies his constrain for space. The other categories are more dramatic and used often to create sensation in news.

6. Findings and discussion.

From the analysis of the data, a large percentage of the headlines were on political matters (93 : 31.00%). This is not surprising if one understands the nature of the country at the present time. Nigeria had experienced many years of military rule and the current democratic dispensation is coming with a lot of issues generating discussion across the nation. Such issues include elections-related issues, such as June 12, 2007, power shift, call for a Sovereign National Conference, *etc.* Next in number to politics are headlines on Crime and Corruption (69 : 23%). The crusade against corruption makes it a major focus in the news. Other social devices always highlighted in headlines are robbery, theft, fraud (419), human rights abuses, assassinations, cultism, *etc.*

It was observed that the use of speech as headlines is very significant. Since news is woven around personalities, the speeches of these personalities matter to the press because they can be used for sensational news. Sometimes, they are paraphrased and used to arouse negative feelings towards unpopular leaders. For instance Nigerians have long awaited General Ibrahim Babangida's (IBB's) explanation on why he scuttled a free and fair democratic process in 1993 (this is usually referred to as June 12 - the date the presidential election was held). Also, recently, there have been calls from various quarters that IBB should apologise to Nigerians for annulling the election. These two issues woven around IBB, couple with his ambition to rule Nigeria again are used to enrich the Nigerian news discourse. For instance the following headlines show the two different extremes on the call for apology from IBB.

H52. Soyinka asks Babangida to apologise on June 12

The Guardian July 28, 2004 (front page)

H31. IBB speaks on June 12

SORRY MY FOOT!

Daily Sun August 8, 2004 (front page)

The response of IBB to the call for apology as presented in H31 is definitely a sensational version of whatever he might have said and the goal is to further arouse negative feelings of those who are aggrieved by the annulment.

Some headlines are observed to be confrontational. They appear as blunt as the writers feel, for example:

H53. Open Letter to Thieves in Power

This Day August 9, 2004 (back page)

H54. This Govt is wicked

Tell July 5, 2004 (front page)

H55. This Govt rewards corrupt people, says Oshiomole

This Day August 11, 2004 (p.2)

H56. Obasanjo's Regime of Poverty and Anguish

Sunday Tribune June 20, 2004 (p.37)

The tone of the headlines above is provocative. It reveals the way people feel about the government and its policies. Words like “wicked” (H54), “thieves” (H53), “poverty” (H56) paint the picture of how the editors feel about the government. This is also a reflection of the feelings of the society.

Sensationalism is sometimes carried to the extent of revealing in clear terms the writer's angle of judgement to an issue. In this case, the judgment is not hidden, but clearly displayed using a unique graphological device (writing system) of putting the angle of judgement in bold and upper case letters, *eg*:

H57. **P - I - T - Y**, 419 Suspect Amaka Anajemba is ashamed of her handcuffs

Sunday Sun July 15, 2004 (p.38)

H58. **DEMONIC** - Another ritualist nabbed ... with human parts

Sunday Sun August 8, 2004 (front page)

H59. **SHOCKING** : TUC backs Obasanjo over Labour Bill*Daily Sun* August 26, 2004 (p.10)

The words in bold and upper case do not just represent the writers' angle of judgement, they also reflect how he wants the reader to see the issue. It was however noticed that this display of writer's angle of judgement is common in one of the six newspapers used for this research - *Sunday Sun* and its sister publication, *Daily Sun* known to contain a lot of sensational news.

There are usually at least two views to most issues: the views of those whose interests are being served and that of those whose interests are being undermined. This is reflected clearly in most of the headlines, where the former, clamour for continuity and the latter, for a change in policies. This ideological division brings in power relations, where the two parties involved are depicted as either powerful or powerless. For instance, the government sometimes talks tough on some issues to show that they are in charge and that the status quo on their policies must be maintained, while the people often counter whatever the government says or acts contrary to government's directives. Some of the issues where this power play is demonstrated are presented in below showing the two extreme views portrayed in them.

Miracle Broadcast

ISSUE	REACTION A	REACTION B
Miracle Broadcast	Miracle Broadcast: court asked to stop NBC's Directive <i>This Day</i> May 18, 2004 (p.7)	Halting advertising of miracles: A stitch in time - Rev Fr. Osu <i>The Guardian</i> on Sunday May 30, 2004 (p.24)

Advertising of miracles by religious groups became a subject of national debate at a point in Nigeria. The National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) issued a warning to radio and television stations to stop such broadcasts. While some Nigerians supported the NBC's

stand, many others, mostly, those whose religious groups were directly affected felt the ban would be an infringement on their religious rights.

State of Emergence

ISSUE	REACTION A	REACTION B
State of Emergency	The president was right on emergency rule - Olujinmi <i>This Day</i> May 25, 2004 (p.40)	State of Emergency, You are Wrong! FRA tell Obasanjo <i>Sunday Punch</i> may 23, 2004 (front page)

Plateau State, one of the states in the middle belt region of Nigeria was engulfed in a religious crisis, which led to the declaration of a state of emergency by the president and the appointment of a sole administrator to replace the elected governor. This declaration became a subject of controversy between the government and its supporters and some human rights activists and lawyers. The latter did not only condemn the act, but also contested it in court.

Obasanjo's Government Performance

ISSUE	REACTION A	REACTION B
Obasanjo's Government's Performance	Obasanjo: The Moses of our time <i>Sunday Tribune</i> June 20, 2004 (p.12)	Obasanjo's Regime of Poverty and anguish <i>Sunday Tribune</i> June 20, 2004 (p.37)

After a few years of Obasanjo's presidency, Nigerians started appraising his government, and the general feeling was that he had failed to meet their aspirations. They hinged their support on the recurrent petroleum products price hike, increasing corruption, incessant

political, ethnic and civil crises and increasing poverty. While the government continued to defend itself and justified its policies, the public continued to condemn the policies.

Fuel Price

ISSUE	REACTION A	REACTION B
Fuel Price	Deregulation will ensure efficient fuel supply - Total MD <i>Nigerian Tribune</i> July 23, 2004 (p.31)	OPC deplores fuel price increase <i>This Day</i> June 5, 2004 (p.7)

In order to reduce her spending, and promote efficiency in the petroleum sector, the government adopted the policy of deregulation, which allowed the market forces to determine prices of goods and services. The extension of this policy to petroleum supply drew negative criticisms from the public because since its adoption, prices of petroleum products have been soaring. All efforts by the government to use propaganda to persuade the public to accept the policy of deregulation have met with little success.

Government Reforms

ISSUE	REACTION A	REACTION B
Government 's Reforms	Why NLC must be reformed - Obasanjo <i>The Punch</i> July19,2004 (p.8)	Labour Reforms: NLC sues FG <i>Saturday Punch</i> August 28, 2004 (p.9)

President Obasanjo's second term started with a lot of reforms, which covered almost every aspect of life. All the groups adversely affected by these reforms particularly the labour unions, have been criticizing them.

Dress Code

ISSUE	REACTION A	REACTION B
Dress Code	UNILAG students ignore New Dress Code <i>The Guardian</i> July 25, 2004 (p.4)	UNAAB bans indecent dressing <i>Nigerian Tribune</i> July 23, 2004 (back page)

The manner of dressing of students in higher institutions became a source of concern for the authorities of these institutions and the various governing boards brought out 'dress codes' specifying the acceptable dressing on campuses. The idea of 'dress code' has been drawing criticisms and legal contests from some Nigerians.

Dollar Pay

ISSUE	REACTION A	REACTION B
Dollar Pay	Obasanjo asks Court to dismiss Fawehinmi's suit over minister's dollar pay <i>The Guardian</i> May 25, 2004 (back page)	Dollar Pay: Gani reiterates Rights of Action <i>This Day</i> may 21, 2004 (p.3)

Many Nigerians have been questioning the rationale for paying some Political officers in the US dollars, while others are paid in the national currency – naira. The officers – the Finance Minister and the Foreign Affairs Minister, were both working for international organisations before their appointment. Despite government's defence of this action, many Nigerians felt it is unjust.

Sovereign National Conference

ISSUE	REACTION A	REACTION B
Sovereign National Conference	SNC, not solution to our problem - Daniel <i>This Day</i> may 25, 2004 (p.3)	1999 Constitution is a time bomb and it'll explode unless we have a National Conference - Kunle Olajide <i>Sunday Punch</i> June 6, 2004 (p. 18)

Since the return to democracy in 1999, after several years of military rule, Nigerians have been clamouring for a national conference, which would discuss the issues central to the corporate existence of the nation. The opposition parties have been in the forefront of this call. The government however, felt such conference would not be needed since there were elected legislators.

Soyinka's call for Obasanjo's Resignation

ISSUE	REACTION A	REACTION B
Soyinka's Call for Obasanjo's Resignation	Group Decries call for President's Resignation <i>This Day</i> , May 24, 2004 (p.8)	Soyinka asks Obasanjo to resign. Wants National Unity Govt <i>This Day</i> May 18, 2004 (front page)

The public outcry against the government made some prominent Nigerians to ask him to resign. Wole, Soyinka, a playwright and a Nobel Laureate was one of the Nigerians in the forefront of this call for the president's resignation.

Power Shift

ISSUE	REACTION A	REACTION B
Power Shift	2007: North should produce the next president <i>This Day</i> may 24, 2004 (p.8)	It will be unjust to deny Ndigbo presidency in 2007 - Shehu Sani <i>Saturday Sun</i> August 21, 2004 (p.11)

Since independence in 1960, the idea of where who rules Nigeria comes from has been a crucial one. This became an issue when it was perceived that there has been monopoly of power by a section of the country. This call for 'power shift' became intensified as ethnic groups in the country continued to protest their marginalisation in the mainstream of national politics. The Igbo of eastern Nigeria are in the forefront of this protest against marginalisation.

Okija Shrine

ISSUE	REACTION A	REACTION B
Okija Shrine	Nobody can destroy Ogwugwu - Okija People <i>Saturday Punch</i> August 21, 2004 (p.8)	Okija issue is criminal - Igbo Professionals <i>Saturday Punch</i> August 21, 2004 (p.9)

In the middle of 2004, newspapers reported the activities of some shrines at a village in the eastern Nigeria called Okija. The shrines were places people went to seek legal redress due to their loss of confidence in the judiciary. Pictures of the surroundings of the shrine showed decomposing human bodies, which the priests of the shrine claimed were corpses of people who failed to abide by the oath they took at the shrine. There was a

general condemnation of the practices at the shrine by some Nigerians, while some rose to defend the activities.

IBB and the Yoruba People

ISSUE	REACTION A	REACTION B
IBB and the Yoruba	IBB's men dare Yoruba <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The whole of S/ west cannot stop Babangida <i>Saturday Sun</i> August 21, 2004 (front page)	2007 - Yoruba'll reject IBB - Fasehun <i>This Day</i> August 6, 2004 (p. 27)

The Yoruba people of the South-west Nigeria felt aggrieved about the annulment of June 12, 1993 election, because it was won by a Yoruba man – Chief M.K.O. Abiola. Ibrahim Babangida, the then military president who annulled the election believed to be the most peaceful and credible election ever conducted in the country was making moves to come back to power. Some Nigerians felt he should apologise to the Yoruba for the annulment, while his supporters felt it was unnecessary.

The presentations above show that on most issues generating controversy in the nation, people are clearly divided along two ideological lines: perpetuity and change. However, it is important to put this caveat that on very few rare occasions, these ideological lines disappear or are not as clearly reflected as shown here. This happens when almost the whole society seem to be united on an issue, usually issues that will foster nationalism. Such issues include the time Nigeria was asked to cede Bakassi, an oil rich peninsula, which used to be part of Nigeria, to Cameroon by the World Court. At such times there is no divergent ideological postures reflected in headlines. All newspapers sing the same tune because the interest of the nation is being undermined. Then, the Government is blamed for not being tactical in handling the issue.

The barrage of criticisms against Obasanjo's regime is constructed in different ways in headlines to criticize his quick temper and authoritarian posture. Some come in form of advice or minor statement, *eg*:

H60. Mr. President, let's reason together

This Day June 12, 2004 (back page)

H61. Obasanjo must calm down to succeed

Sunday Punch may 25, 2004 (p.6)

H62. A President and His Temper

This Day May 25, 2004 (p.17)

H63. A President's Appetite for Power

Tell Jan 26, 2004 (p.51)

These headlines presuppose certain things which are known to those who are familiar with some historical events in which President Obasanjo had been adamant on some issues and times he had lost his temper and spoken or did things in manners he ought not to.

6. Conclusion.

This study examines how ideology plays a vital role on the construction of newspaper headline. Working within the discipline of Critical Discourse Analysis, our findings show clearly that beyond the generally observed rhetorical and graphological devices employed in newspaper headlines, there are also hidden ideological meanings behind those written words. The type of headlines that dominate the Nigerian newspapers studied within the period of this study – headlines on politics shows clearly that the country is in a period of democratizing. Editors also favour the use of plain headlines more than the other types because they are short and conventional. This study also shows that these ideological meanings are clearly expressions of the representation of opinions of the people in the

society – that is those whose interests are being served and those whose interests are being undermined. We also observed that on some rare occasions, the people may be united ideologically especially on issues that fosters nationalism. On such occasions, almost all the newspaper headlines are singing the same tune, since they have to reflect the views of the society. It also reveals that headlines are used to initiate, sustain and shape discourse on the views of readers on national issues.

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