

SYNTACTIC CHOICES IN SELECTED GHANAIAN DAILY NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

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Abstract

This paper examined the syntactic choices made by journalists in Ghanaian daily newspaper headlines using Halliday & Matthiessen's (2004) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The aim was to investigate syntactic devices used in these headlines in relation to press social roles as well as the ideological nuances in such syntactic devices in Ghanaian print media reports. Two Ghanaian most widely-read newspapers – Daily Graphic and Daily Guide – were purposively selected for this study. Forty news headlines covering issues such as politics, education, and economic crisis were examined from the editions published between January 2021 and March 2023. This timeframe was selected because it was a time of intense and massive stories/news in the airwaves largely due to the aftermath of the global coronavirus pandemic and the impending political elections in 2024. The Findings revealed that Ghanaian newspaper reporters' choice of syntactic devices such as modality, transitivity, voice, agency and action and modification are largely influenced by the need to perform some social functions through syntactic maneuvers and themalize some moral and ethical roles of the press in sustaining democracy for effective nation building in Ghana.

Keywords: Syntax, Language and Media, Newspaper Headlines, Daily Graph, Daily Guide

1.0 Introduction

Language is most certainly a communal phenomenon. This is because all its users must share certain rules and codes; the

basic codes they must learn in order to use the language and to share understanding about the external world (Saussure, 1974). English sentences for instance, follow the sequence subject-verb. Saussure used the term *langue* to refer to this basic structure of language, the communal language system or the grammar that all users of the language use to generate infinite number of sentences. This, he distinguished from *parole* or speech which is the actual usage of the English language. This explanation of language can also be equated to Chomsky's competence – the rules of the language, and performance – the actual surface structures of the language.

Since the beginning of the electric age in the mid-19th century, numerous technologies have affected how the language is used both in the spoken and written aspects such as the telegraph, telephone, radio, gramophone, typewriter, television, Walkman and MP3 players, digital and other mobile media, as well as speech recognition technologies. Whatever be the medium, the rules of the language is very paramount to the understanding and the interpretation of the codes/structures of the language. This study takes a critical look at the syntactic element of the language of the media. The media is best defined by the roles they play in society. They inform, educate and entertain through news, features and analysis in the press. They also produce documentaries, dramas, current affairs programmes, public service announcements, magazine programmes and other forms of programming for radio, television and newspaper. The media is a conduit through which voices, perspectives and lives are brought into the public sphere, therefore, the study of how language is used in the media has a huge influence on the users of language in that society. According to Upah (2016), the use of language is more encompassing, because it also embraces the non-verbal form to:

1. To direct superfluous nervous energy
2. To communicate ideas, commend and criticize
3. As a means of expression

As a vehicle conveying ideas and thought, language serves a network of communication to convince and impact others, create humour and to display love for one another. This means language enacts very vital roles in man's social life and entails evidential or propositional information (Finegan, 2012).

1.1 Language and Media

News headlines enjoy wider readership than any genre in newspapers. They are therefore strategically crafted to persuade readers of some opinions and attitudes. This is partly achieved by arrays of linguistic resources which play out in them (Miller, 2004). They do not only aim to persuade readers of some opinions but they often propagate particular ideologies or recommend certain attitudes to the community, for example to take actions towards an upcoming event. The wider readerships they enjoy make them vital in shaping political and social discourses and offer constructive contribution in nation building and the ideologies are intended to persuade readers of some opinions, beliefs or form attitudes (van Dijk (1998, Logogye, 2016, Alhasan, 2019).

It is this thinking that informs the need for a linguistic enquiry which aims at helping readers better understand what news headlines represent. Lately, more studies through several language approaches and theories have targeted registers and other forms of linguistic resources in news headlines. These approaches and theories include critical discourse analysis, Systemic Functional Grammar, Speech Act, pragmatic analysis and corpus linguistics. In this regard, this study adopts Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach. The attempt is to enhance readers understanding of the issues in news headlines.

In media discourse, language is used to express succinct ideas and perceptions which transform, indict, persuade, and shape people's opinions. From the discourse patterns in the media, language is displayed as an agent of persuasion and empowerment. Thus, Adjei & Ewusi-Mensah (2016) assert that there is an intrinsic power in language to shape opinions and attitudes. Language used in the media equally portrays concepts, ideas and reflects attitudes. It has the power to influence ideologies, shapes and reshapes attitudes or ideas (Malcolm, 1997). Furthermore, language used in the media is capable of influencing public opinion or promote critical thinking and influence actions on critical contemporary issues in the society.

In the last decade, the world has witnessed a massive growth of the media in the print and online aspects. As a result, media (online) discourse has received attention especially as it has become the most effective means to express cogent and explicit ideas and beliefs which change, implicate, convince, and redirect the thinking of people. This is the case in Ghana. Ghana has powerful press which churns out newspapers on daily basis notable among them are Daily Graphic and Daily Guide which have wide national coverage. The print media in Ghana is portrayed as a catalyst for persuading and empowering people. This paper therefore takes a critical look at the syntactic choices in selected Ghanaian Daily Newspaper Headlines.

There have been many discussions on media discourse. For instance, Ogungbe's (2016) work examined the role of the media and democracy from the critical discourse analysis perspective. Arome's (2016) view was on the lexico-semantic perspective of *The Tribune* newspaper while Nnuneli (1986) focus was on the wider scope as he examined the language of mass media in Nigeria in general. Tabassum et al (2013) carried a

critical discourse analysis of the left and right wing ideologies in Pakistani English newspaper editorials and Rashid et al (2017) evaluated lexical cohesion in Nigeria newspaper genre with a focus on editorials. This study focused attention on the integral grammatical structure of headlines in two most widely read newspapers in Ghana – Daily Graphic and Daily Guide. Therefore, it is believed that the findings of this study will add to the body of literature and knowledge on the syntactic analysis and the media language.

2.0 The Purpose of the Study

This study critically examines the syntactic choices in Ghanaian news headlines. The objective is to explore the language of the media in mediating reality and their roles in nation building in Ghana. It also aims at identifying instances of institutional ideological inclinations in the media. This focus is necessary as it will help in exposing general socio-economic problems and consequently result in the consolidation of democracy and good governance in Ghana.

3.0 The Theory of Syntax

Syntax as a branch of linguistics has been identified over the years as one of the most powerful and influential ways of thinking about the media, language and texts (Bignell, 2002). As a critical discipline, syntax has increasingly gained grounds in recent time. One of the most fundamental units of linguistic description is the sentence. This is shown by the fact that from the beginning of the study of language, it was the sentence and the word that were considered to be the basic units of analysis. Many of the categories of syntactic analysis that are used today go back to the ancient Greeks, in particular to ideas of the Stoics, Aristotle, Dionysius Thrax, and Apollonius Dyscolus. The word “syntax” is derived from the Greek word “syntaxis”, which means “together” and “sequence”. The term signifies the way in which words are

put together in an orderly manner to form phrases or clauses/sentences. As such, syntax, in its broadest sense, refers to the study of all arrangements of sentences by which meaning is created and exchanged based on phenomena that have been constructed.

The distinction between lexis (the vocabulary) and syntax (the construction of sentences) finds a parallel in two most important types of book in which languages are generally described: *The Dictionary and Grammar*. The dictionary provides information about the individual properties of words, whereas grammar deals with the more general rules of lexis, syntax and morphology.

Firstly, there is a very close interrelation between particular words and the grammatical constructions in which they appear: for instance, a noun such as “spaghetti” can only occur as the subject of a sentence with a singular verb; a verb such as “manage” can be followed by a to-infinitive complement but not by an ing-clause; a verb such as “decide” is much more likely to be followed by a [that-CL] or [to-INF] complement than to be followed by a noun phrase; it is much more likely for a verb such as “argue” to occur in a passive construction than for a verb such as “love”. Secondly, when we produce language, we do not seem to create structures on the basis of syntactic rules and then fill certain positions in the syntactic structure by words; rather we very often seem to make use of larger chunks of language: “this applies to constructions of the road”; prefabricated chunks such as “what I wanted to say” or to collocations of the type “entirely agree” or “black coffee”. Thirdly, it is quite possible that syntactic constructions are acquired and stored in the brain in a way very similar to that in which individual words are acquired and stored.

3.1 Syntactic Analysis

Syntactic analysis is the process of examining the string of words in a language confirming the rules and arrangements of words in grammar. In syntactic analysis, the parts of speech are thoroughly analyzed. For instance, in this study, modality in Ghanaian newspaper headlines and other subheadings in the transitivity processes such as material process, verbal process, relational process and mental process; modification: pejorative and superfluous classification which have been classified as an exploitation of the syntactic resources of the modification in making reference; voice, agency and action attribution and the use of non-finite or elliptical expressions were all examine in relation to their cohesiveness/correctness, meaning and their ideologies.

4.0 Methodology

This is a qualitative study which adopts the content analytical method. Forty (40) headlines from the front pages of two widely-read newspapers in Ghana – Daily Graphic and Daily Guide, from March 2021 – March 2023 were purposively selected for this study. This timeframe was selected for this study because it was a time of intense and massive stories/news in the airwaves largely due to the aftermath of the global coronavirus pandemic and the impending political elections in 2024. Issues such as economic hardship, educational management and election were rift in the news. The analysis of data was hinged on the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

5.0 Theoretical framework

The newspaper headlines analyzed in this study contain linguistic devices used for the evaluation of issues, expression of opinions and attitude, and promotion of critical thinking. In doing this, Halliday's SFL was employed in the analysis. SFL explains language from the way it is actually used in discourse and not just on the formal relations between linguistic units. Thus, language is

viewed as a system of meaning potentials. Opara (2011) notes that functional grammarians focus attention on the possible connection between form and function, while systemic functional linguistics focuses on what people do with language. This study adopts the systemic functional approach to linguistics by depicting how linguistic patterns unravel ideologies, express opinions, and attitudes, show persuasion, shape or reshape ideas and evoke critical thinking among others.

6.0 Analysis and Discussion

The analysis x-rays the syntactic resources/devices employed by the journalists to mediate reality. The syntactic resources are deployed as representation resources and they serve as internalized guides for information processing as they convey thematic meanings constructed from and embodied in the syntactic bricks. The data reveals syntactic devices such as modality, transitivity, modification, passivization, agency and action attribution.

(a) Modality

Basically, there are two major perspective from which modality can be examined: philosophical (Aristotle, 1991) and linguistically. Linguistically, it can be viewed from different perspectives such as Semantics (Palmer 1979, 1986, 2001), Typology (Narrog, 2012), Pragmatics (Leech 1983; Papafragou, 2002), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday 1985; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004), Corpus Linguistics (Stubbs 2001; Baker 2014) and political discourse which has not seen much analysis in terms of modality (Xu, 2015). The attention in this paper is on SFL.

Modulation is defined as a kind of connotative meaning which relates to obligation or permission, including willingness and ability (Hardjanto & Mazia, 2019). Modality refers to the way in which a text syntactically expresses attitude toward a person,

situation, or policy representation. In other words, with the use of modal verbs such as *can, will, shall, may, must, could, would, should, might* and other modal phrases such as *it seems, it is possible, may be, and probably*, the writer can set the tone of the text to convey the degree of certainty, authority, doubt, surety, possibility of impossibility, contingency or necessity of something (Nemickienė, 2019). In Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), subject and finite are the constituents of the mood when the clause functions to exchange information or goods and services between interactants (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

Modality system refers to the ways of expressing meaning which lies in the distance between the choices of “Yes” and “No”. It is a linguistic system which expresses the speaker’s judgment toward the topic. Modality refers to the validity of what is being predicated, stated, questioned, commended or offered within the clause. On the other hand, it can show the social role relationship (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The meaning of Modality can be considered and presented by looking at the types of modality that can generally be expressed by modal verbs and adjuncts (Fontaine, 2013). Proposal is the form of the clause when it functions to exchange goods and services. In proposals there are two types of intermediate degrees of possibility depending on the speech function whether to offer or command. In commands, the intermediate values are used to express obligation such as “you must go” whereas in offers the intermediate degrees are used to express inclination. These scales of obligation and inclination are known as Modulation. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) argue that obligation and inclination are expressed by modal verbs such as “must” and “should” as a part of mood and also can be expressed as predicator in residue (the remainder part of clauses which is complementary to the mood part).

The analysis shows examples of modality in the forms of modal verbs and adjuncts showing their occurrence in the modal space between the positive and negative poles of meaning.

Text 1: NDC Will Lose 2024 Elections ... says the president
Daily Guide, Thursday, 16 February, 2023

The headline in text 1 expresses some degree of certainty and surety. The use of the modal “will” underscores this. The president goes on to give an assurance by crediting his government as competent and achieving and therefore capable of defeating the major opposition, NDC in the next election.

Text 2: We’ll Protect Environment at All Cost...Vice President

Daily Graphic, Thursday, 20 July, 2021

The use of modality in text 2 is to express the determination of the vice president to protect the environments against illegal mining and other activities that doesn’t rest well with the environment. Nevertheless, the framing of the headline is of a serious warning to persons who engage in the destructive activities of “galamsey” (illegal mining). It is also to sensationalize to attract a wide readership and indirectly commend himself and his government he’s representing on the fight against galamsey. By the use of the modality, he expresses the ideology that the past government did not do much in the protection of the land and the environment. It also positioned him and his government as a proactive one in the governance of the country.

Text 3: We’ll Recapture Power In 2024 – Fiifi Kwetey

Daily Graphic Wednesday, 1 December, 2022. By Samuel Duodu

This headline captures Fiifi Kwetey, a strong voice in the NDC declaring in all certainty that his party, NDC will wrestle power out of the thresholds of the ruling power in the next election year. Again, the speaker’s association with his party is made evident as the plural personal pronoun, “we” and also includes all

other members of the party as well as those who think the current government is not doing enough to better their lives. The modal, will, is used to show the NDC's strong intention to return to power in 2024.

Text 4: We'll Snatch Presidency from NPP – Ofose-Ampofo
Daily Graphic Saturday, 17 December, 2022. By Gertrude Anka Nyavi

The modality employed in text above is used to express determination, certainty and wiliness. Gertrude Anka Nyavi was then Chairman of NDC, the major opposition party and this utterance reinstates what Fifi Kwete, a major voice in the party, said on the first of the same month, December, 2022. By ascribing the utterance to the chairman of the party communicates volumes about the weight of the message. The chairman's intention is clear, strong should be regarded as a threat to the ruling party.

Text 5: Ofori Atta Must Go...NPP, NDC MPs Tells Nana
Daily Guide Wednesday, 26 October, 2022

The headline in text 5 indicates a necessity or an important reason why Mr. Ofori Atta (the Minister for Finance) has to go. "Must" is a modal verb used in the headline to pass a strong emotion due to the facts that the nation is going through economic distress at the moment. Therefore, the opposition party and even some members of the ruling NPP party warns the president, Nana, about the necessity of the Finance Minister's need to resign.

The Daily Graphic publishes this headline to indicate a strong sense of togetherness in the house of parliamentarians, that everyone is on board with this idea, and that it is very crucial that the Finance Minister leaves the position, willing or unwillingly, to save the economy.

Text 6: Government Should Cut Expenditure...IEA Prescribes Reduced Spending on Free SHS, National Cathedral

Daily Graphic Thursday, 26 January, 2023

This headline expresses some level of recommendation, advice and a personal obligation to the Government of Ghana. The journalist further reinforces the obligation by ascribing the statement to the Institute of Economic Affairs in Ghana (IEA). This headline is also an attempt to deliberately bring the government in alliance with the Institute to curb the excessive public funds spending in order to save the public purse and to create a fiscal space for the economy, which in turn will help to convince Ghanaians that the government and its agencies are working effectively.

(b) Transitivity

Transitivity is identified by Halliday and Mathiessen (2004) as a lexicogrammatical system that indicates how language represents experiences. The system consists of six process types, namely material process, mental process, relational process, verbal process, behavioural process and existential process. Transitivity borders the semantic and the grammatical concepts. This means that transitivity accounts for the meaning of experiences using the grammar of the language. Ngula (2015) explains that the main means of understanding the meaning associated with the clause is through the process types.

The material process is the process which involves physical actions and events. It is the most dominant of the process types and has varied sub types which can be subcategorized into different groups. All material processes have an actor. Sometimes the actor is not visible in the clause but it is always recoverable. Sometimes, the material processes can do something to an existing entity or thing to transform it from one state to another

(transformation). There are two important participants in the material processes, that is, the actor and the goal. The actor is the entity that performs an action in the clause while the goal is the entity the actions performed by an actor affects. In other words, the actor is the doer of the actions in the clause while the goal is the one the actions are aimed or directed at. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) identify other participants which are related to the material processes – the initiator, scope, client, recipient and attribute

(b1) Verbal Process

The “sayer” verbs are group of transitivity process type called the verbal process. Verbal process is important in the media discourse based on the fact that they say. Though they are minor process type in transitivity, they are responsible for the production of speech. It is the manifestation of what is going on in the mind through physical actions of speech production (Flowerdew, 2013). Examples are “tell”, “narrate”, “announce”, “speak”, “denounce”. There are four participants related to the verbal process. It has the “sayer” (speaker), the “receiver” (the addressee), the “target” (the one the message is aimed at) and the “verbiage” (the content of the clause or what is said in the clause).

Verbal process is used to project what the newsmakers said in the news events. The following are illustrations from the data:

Text 6: Nana Warns Traders On ‘Greedy Profits’

Daily Guide Tuesday 1 November, 2022

The sayer in the headline in text 6 is the president of the republic of Ghana and the verbiage is the ‘warns’ about the unnecessary and greedy profits traders are mounting on the original prices of products and produce. The headline is not just a mere act of reporting a warning, rather the Daily Guide reporter, who also have interest in the subject of discussion uses it to engage the dubious and greedy traders who hike the prices of their wares

in the face of the economic crisis in the country. He uses his role as a journalist to support government agenda in bringing financial easiness, freedom and development to the people of Ghana. Daily Guide also uses the verbal process as a medium to challenge and encourage Ghanaians to shun and frown on corrupt practices and extortion.

Text 7: Parliament Grills Ofori Atta...On Debt Exchange

Daily Graphic Monday, 13 February, 2023

The verbiage processes in the above text contain a sayer and who it is being said to. The reporter uses this headline to tell the public how bad the exchange rate in Ghana is against the international market and how ‘excruciating’ was the question-and-answer exercise between the law makers (parliament) and person in charge of the country’s finances (Ofori Atta) hence the verbal process “grills”. This also tells the public that the parliament is not happy with the Finance Minister and that inviting and “grilling” him in the form of question-and-answer is a sure way to put him on his toes to stabilize the economy.

(b2) Material Process

Material process is the process which involves physical actions and events. It is the most dominant of the process types in transitivity and has varied sub-types. Ngula (2015) states that all material processes have an actor. Sometimes the actor is not visible in the clause but is recoverable because the actors are usually implied in the clause. Sometimes, the material processes can do something to an existing entity or thing to transform it from one state to another – creative and transformative (Ngula, 2015). There are two important participants in the material processes; they are the actor and the goal. The actor is the entity that performs an action in the clause while the goal is the entity the actions

performed by an actor affects. In other words, the actor is the doer of the actions in the clause while the goal is the one the actions are aimed or directed at. Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) identify other participants which are related to the material processes. They are the initiator, scope, client, recipient and attribute. In the data, journalists used material processes to bring out burning issues in the country.

Text 8: Presidents Makes Ministerial Changes...4 New Nominees, 2 Elevated, 1 Reshuffled

Daily Graphic Wednesday, 8 February 8 2023

The above text contains a material process through the use of “makes” as it demands a physical process of ministerial positions in parliament. The reporter uses the material process to call to existence something that was not before. Although, anonymity of source is a usual journalistic ethic and a practice, the suppression of the source could have been used to reinstate the ideological belief that the top hierarchy of the presidency in Ghana is about to experience a major change in the ministerial jurisdiction. Notwithstanding, this is in line with the media function of establishing in the mind of the public norms for national development and rebuking the notion of “one way” ministers which has led to dysfunction in many of the ministerial sectors.

Text 9: GES Releases SHS Placement

Daily Guide Thursday, 16 February, 2023

The material process in text 9 has GES (Ghana Education Service) as the actor, the process of releasing the SHS (Senior High School) placement as the recipient. The representation is not a mere rumour or hearsay but a true assertion. The material process “releases” bring to existence some action. The reporter tries to be as accurate and clear as possible as he gives a sense of timeliness from GES. In other words, GES has been swift in its

release of the students' placement in the senior high school to prevent public scrutiny and any form of anxiety. By this, GES prides itself in providing effective and quality education services to the country.

Text 10: Child Rights Dares GES.....ver Sacked Students

Daily Guide Friday 13 January, 2023

In this text, “child rights” is the actor, “dare” is the process, GES, the receiver of the material process and “sacked students” as the goal. The reporter informs the public of the issue concerning some senior high students who were dismissed from school over their rude and insulting utterances against the president of the country which was caught on camera in the social media. The reporter focuses readers' attention on the action of the actor “dare” which suggests challenging and taunting. The newspaper through the material process indirectly calls on the president of Ghana to act and shield the sacked student from the harsh decision of GES and also creates relevance and importance at the same time from the public

(b3) Mental Process

Mental process expresses people's experiences of the inner world. This process type represents thinking, feeling and wanting. It is not everything that is expressed by acting is out. It can be done internally without showing or executing an action. In other words, it deals with the experiences that take place in the mind. It also has sub-categories just as the material processes. Four subcategories of the mental process are identified: Emotional, which is realized in verbs such as “love”, “admire” and “like”; Cognition, realized in verbs such as “know”, “understand”, “believe”, “forget”; Perception which is realized in verbs such as “feel”, “hear”, “notice”, “taste”; and finally desideration which is marked by verbs such as “hope”, “want”, “wish” and “desire” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1997, 2004; Ngula 2015). The two

participants associated with the mental process are the senser and the phenomena. The senser is the one who is sensing an entity and the entity he is sensing is the phenomena.

Below are some examples from the date:

Text 11: Ato Forson Fights Gov't Over Old Fridges Ban

Daily Guide Thursday, 5 January, 2023

In the headline above, Ato Forson (a member of the opposition party, NDC) is given the 'fighter' role. The fight here is a mental process against the government's decision to ban old fridges importation because he and his party believe that this ban is going to negatively affect the life and livelihood of the poor citizenry. This mental process can be manifested in the form of confrontation, criticism, and public complaints. *Daily Guide* publishes this not just to inform but to criticize the government on its decisions on the economy of country and also to encourage a debate/fight against the ban of old fridge importation.

Text 12: Graphic Takes Another Leap...To Bring Newspapers Closer to Readers

Daily Graphic Saturday 8 June, 2022

Daily Graphic is projected as the 'senser' (though inanimate object) who has taken another "leap" in news-making by bringing newspaper closer to their readers. This leap signifies making significant and effective attempt to have something done and this is manifested in its action of publishing its news online for wider accessibility and readability across the globe. *Daily Graphic* has described itself as a resourceful company by this achievement as it continuous to be the giant and most published newspaper since 1951. The framing of the headline demanded applause to the newspaper for its efforts and achievement.

(b4) Relational Process

Relational process is one of the dominant transitivity process types. This process type is quite different from the

material and mental. It deals with the relationship that exists between entities. It is the process type which represents possession, attribution, and identification. There are different categories of relational process, that is, attributive and identifying relational process. The attributive is concerned with the state of an entity, thing or a person while the identifying category shows the objective or motive of an entity. The relational process could also be circumstantial or possessive in nature.

Below are some examples from the data:

Text 13: 1% E-Levy Kicks Off Today

Daily Graphic Wednesday 11 January, 2023

This is a relational process in which the reporter projects a 1% e-levy on Ghanaians as having a starting day. The relational process is preferred by the reporter because it allows the news headline to focus attention of the public on the e-levy's ultimatum date. To say that the ultimatum kicks off today implies that the e-levy is anticipated agenda by the government to Ghanaians. The newspaper tries to reinstate the public assumption that probably the collection of this e-levy was just a talk. The headline takes further action by reminding the citizens of the starting day and there is no further postponement.

Text 14: Lordina Grabs Cars, Cash from Nana

Daily Guide Tuesday 28 September, 2022

Daily Guide uses relational process in text 14 to report major characteristics of the former first lady of the republic, Mrs. Lordina Mahama. The newly reelected President, Nana Akufo-Addo, magnanimously gave the former first lady a brand-new vehicle for her comfort. This gesture thus shows that the president wishes the outgone government well and perhaps is willing to work together with the opposition for peace and harmony in the county especially in the face of economic hardship in Ghana. Daily Guide publishes this as front-page news in order to show

Ghanaians and indeed, the entire world the level of togetherness in democracy and the harmony among Ghanaian politicians.

Text 15: NDC Stages Political ‘Coup’ In Ashanti

Daily Guide Thursday 25 August, 2022

In text 15, *Daily Guide* uses relational process to assess the state in the Ashanti Region and expresses an opinion. The newspaper foregrounds the statement credited to the Ashanti Region in order to validate its opinion. The fact that the editor uses “Ashanti” as headline tends to portray the statement as the newspaper’s standpoint. By framing the text through relational process, the journalist thus challenges the government to take drastic steps against NDC for threatening the peace that exist in the ruling party’s stronghold – Ashanti Region. The relational process used in the headline frames NDC as unjustifiably, dominating and overly ambitious.

(c) The Use of Non-Finite or Elliptical Expression

Text 16: Overcoming Economic Challenges: Eschew Extreme Partisanship, 2 Statesmen Advise

Daily Graphic Thursday 5 January, 2023

In the text above, the use of a non-finite or elliptical expression crafted in the passive voice (2 statesmen advise) is aimed at foregrounding the political leaders who repeatedly advise politicians to work together to overcome economic crisis the country is going through. As used in the report, the word “statesmen” connotes skillfulness, experienced and respected political figures. They can also be said to be diplomats whose words carry weight and should be heeded if progress is to be made among politicians

(d) Modification: Pejorative and Superfluous Classification

Pejorative and superfluous classification involves exploitation of the syntactic resources of the modification in making reference to scornful, judgmental and derogatory terms. It

also entails the use of categories labels by the means of which society differentiates between classes of people. These differences include age, gender, class, wealth, provenance ethnicity, religion. Modification is a linguistic phenomenon which involves making a structure pungent, explicit and specific by deploying other constituents (modifiers) to co-occur with it (Bright, 1992). The focus on modification is usually adjectival description of the head noun. The choice of modifiers is determined by two goals. One, the news reporter tries to achieve economy and clarity which are important principles to the textual rhetoric (Leech 1983). Hence, adjectival description in noun phrase helps to reduce the number of sentences by collapsing them into fewer noun phrases and making the news clear as adjectives paint clearer pictures of the head nouns.

Two, adjectival description or noun phrase modification is often dictated by the reporter's interest and may consequently be pejorative. The reporter's intention for modification may be to express craftily his/her personal, social, political or institutional interest. The intention is often concealed by the writer in a way that the reader will not easily detect that he/she is being manipulative to form an opinion, attitude or act in a way.

Here is an example form the data:

Text 17: 12 Grabbed for Carjacking, Murder

Daily Guide Friday 3 February, 2023

The framing of the above text by superfluously describing the actors as “carjackers” and “murderers”, the *Daily Guide* reporter assumes the role of a teacher as he/she educates the Ghanaian readers about how bad, dangerous and serious the action of the people is. *Daily Guide* implies the frame as a form of persuasive strategy to highlight an ideological shift about the changing behaviour of some Ghanaians who have moved from petty stealing to carjacking and murder. The two words

“carjacking” and “murder” are ideologically revealing. The headline is also to encourage Ghanaians to be vigilant and careful and ultimately challenges the police, parents and guidance, religious groups and indeed, anybody in the position to be up on their duties for safe society.

(e) Voice, Agency and Action Attribution

Syntactic arrangement conveys a particular message about power relation. The doer of an action may be foregrounded as in active structure or background as in passive voice, depending on the purpose the writer intends to achieve. The passive voices for example bring the receiver or experiencer of the action of a verb to the fore and backgrounds the actor (Scollon 1998). Some particular functions are performed by placing the actor or agent in this prominent position in a sentence or by completely de-emphasizing or removing the agent. In other words, English provides the language user with choices in the arrangement of element in a sentence.

However, the choice of either active or passive voice and the choice of the specific type of passivation (agented or agentless) especially in news texts are not unconnected with the need to perform some particular roles. The reporter can overtly present a news headline as powerful and another as powerless through the property of textual rhetoric. This is what McGregor (2003) refers to as agency. It is often used by a reporter to hide meaning from unsuspecting audience and such meaning usually remain hidden unless made visible by the critical analyst. With the use of active voice, passive voice, agency and action attribution, the Ghanaian press focuses the attention of the public on some unjust, brutal, and undemocratic practices in Ghana with the aim of vilifying such act so that perpetrators are forced to change. Let us examine some texts from the date:

Text 18: Soldier Killers Exposed...Pistol Recovered

Daily Guide Wednesday 29 May, 2021

In text 24, the report is framed in the active voice indicating the reporter is sure and certain that the killers of Maxwell Mahama, a soldier, has been exposed through the recovery of the pistol from the village where he was gruesomely murdered. The reporter achieves both economy and clarity by unambiguously stating how his killers were caught. Also, the use of attribution of agency “soldier” and the emphasis coded with the use of the word “killers” is capable of rendering the killers of the soldier even more guilty and bringing the culprits to justice.

Text 19: Major Maxwell Mahama Lynching...Denkyira Obuasi snail seller informant arrested

Daily Graphic Friday 9 June, 2021

In text 19, the framing of the headline is in the active voice and the attribution of the action of the verb “lynching” is to the Denkyira Obuasi’s snail seller. She is depicted as the informant who gave false alarm about the soldier, claiming that he was an armed-robber, while the soldier was innocent. The soldier unfortunately became a victim of mob justice. The framing depicts the ideological inclination of reinstating the general belief or assumption that Major Maxwell Mahama was a robber or a spy, which provoked the people of Denkyira Obuasi to lynch him. Daily Graphic also publishes this headline because they want to create awareness against mob injustice and instant justice.

Conclusion

As a giant media institution, journalism in Ghana might be skilled than any other institution in defending democracy and doing this without being misunderstood. Again, as a powerful and the fourth arm of government, journalism and their reports can be seen as a useful tool in controlling and running of government. This study reveals that the modal auxiliary “will” is very prevalent

in newspaper headlines in Ghana. This modal auxiliary is used to communicate strong promises and better governance amidst economic challenges from the opposition political parties, the president's conviction of improvements in the economic crisis, effective educational management and general optimism in the reelection of his party power. The findings confirm the previous studies claims that "will" is about the strongest modal verb, and is very suitable in expressing strong intentions (Alwan & Bose, 2014), certainty (Linebarger, 2010), determination and promise (Ngula & Nartey, 2014) and strong wish and determination (Alhassan, 2019). Common to many utterances in the Ghanaian political sphere, the data demonstrates some extent of Ghanaian ideas, thoughts and inclinations. Therefore, newspaper headlines in Ghana have contributed greatly towards sensitizing, applauding and shaping of ideologies and ultimately play a crucial role in sustaining democracy.

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