

Nominal Group as Language in Selected Nigerian Newspaper Headlines

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Abstract

This study, from a pragmatic perspective examines nominal group as language in selected Nigerian newspaper headlines. Despite the substantial scholarships on nominal group as a grammatical category in English showcasing its traditional functions in grammatical structures, not much has been done on this grammatical category from the perspective of the print media. This study aims at achieving two viable goals. Firstly, it ascertains NGPs as intentional constructive language types deployed by newspaper headlines to initiate discourse, sustain and shape the views of the readers on the issues propagated, Secondly, it accentuates that NGPs in print media discourse perform some acts that are ideologically driven. That is, they have hidden meanings that reflect the views of those whose interest is being served and those whose interest is being undermined. Twenty headlines are purposively selected from Daily Trust, Vanguard, The Nation, The Guardian and Daily Sun, and the nominal group patterns were examined for their grammar, rhetorical peculiarities and functions. Halliday's Systemic functional linguistics along with Searle's Speech Act model of pragmatics is deployed for the analysis of texts.

Keywords: Pragmatics; Nominal groups; Ideology; Newspaper headline; Speech act; Systemic functional linguistics.

1. Introduction

The use of language in a social context has been a major concern of linguists in contemporary times. Hence, pragmatics has become the pivot to understanding how language is used in a social context. Pragmatics considers language as an instrument of interaction, what people mean when they use language in a context and how we communicate and understand each other. It considers the negotiation of meaning between speaker and listener. Pragmatics encompasses speech act theory, conversational implicature, talk in interaction and other approaches to language behavior. Often times, a writer uses language to achieve his aim, the hearer in turn, is expected to understand and interpret the message or utterance of the writer in a particular way. This conception of communication is what gives rise to the approach of pragmatics. Pragmatics enables one to have a good grasp of the language of any discourse. Its aim emphasizes on how language users communicate in writing or oral conversation not necessarily how grammatically correct the sentences are. Hence, the intention or function of an utterance becomes central to speech acts (Austin 1962, Searle, 1969).

The notion of a reporter's intended meaning is a very crucial phenomenological element in the study of pragmatics as this study intends to explicate. In linguistic, we analyze language from its structure and function. This implies that there are two basic facts about language. Firstly, language is viewed as a high degree of organization that appears to our perceptions. Secondly, language is often used by people to do things, mean things, and achieve things such as questioning, declaring, given instruction/order, persuading interlaced with diverse forms of illocutionary force. Nominal group as language type has come to be accorded a fundamental place in the repertoire of newspaper headline discourses. It proves to be one of the effective strategies deployed by reporters to initiate discourse, sustain and shape the views of the readers on the issues propagated. It plays a crucial role in the foregrounding of meaning, in the comprehension and interpretation of a reporter's intended meaning as this study intends to unveil.

Language is not a mere medium of communication on the objective world, but a definite part of social process (Simpson, 1993). It is a system of communication and communication in turn, is seen as a tool in the hands of writers in solving problems. This means that the production of a written text is a social process which interlaces interaction between the writer and the reader. Halliday (1978:143) sees language primarily as a 'social semiotics' and a resources for meaning, through it, humans negotiate, construct, and change the nature of social experience. Consequently, language is a fundamental phenomenon for the communication of ideas, knowledge and intentions. Newspaper reporters like opinion leaders, courts, government, politicians and so on, play a crucial role in shaping issues in the society through the use of language. 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.

Taiwo (2004: 324) submits that headlines are strategically used by newspaper editors to make an impact on readership. According to him, editors choose emotive vocabulary, rhetorical and

graphological devices to achieve this. Hence, NGPs are formidable in this direction. As emotion inducing strategies, NGPs enhance the reader's understanding of the content and context of newspaper headlines. They assist greatly in integration of lexical items and creation of reality in print media texts. It is worthwhile to note that pragmatics adequately accounts for ideology since language and ideology are two inseparable concepts. The way a writer communicates with language is determined by social structures. Whatever informs a text can be said to be the idea behind the context of the text. Ideologies are based on a set of beliefs and attitudes shared by a group, class or society and these are often expressed through language. Every instance of language is a reflection of the prevailing discursive and ideological systems in the society where it is used. Newspaper reporters use NGPs as linguistic tropes to project their viewpoints and to suit the ideological expectations of their audience.

English is a highly nominalized language, and lexical meaning is largely carried in nominal group, hence, the newspaper headlines are no exception. Language is one of the principal mediums through which meaning is mobilized in the social world. Language indeed is a social practice and its use is effective in the formation and reproduction of ideas. It has a crucial role in ideological process. It determines individuals' thought and actions. It is the linking element between individuals' knowledge of the world and their social practices, since it mediates individuals' thought and behaviour.

2. Literature review and statement of the problem

There have been several studies on print media discourses; however, not much has critically examined the nominal groups from the perspective of news headlines. Alo (2007) investigates the patterns of representing and identifying people in the Nigerian newspapers and magazine through the linguistic mechanism of nominal group in English. His aim is to showcase the relationships of form, function and context. He observes that the Nigerian newspaper reporters use complex nominal groups to represent people, their identities and roles in the news. Ayodabo (2013), from a stylistic perspective, examines the dynamics of the structures of headlines in some newspapers in Nigeria, with a view to identifying the types of headlines cast; examining the syntactic structures of the headlines; and as well as evaluating the level of social responsibility of the editors.

Taiwo (2007), working within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis examines how ideology plays a vital role on the construction of newspaper headline. His study unveils that beyond the generally observed rhetorical and graphological devices employed in newspaper headlines, there are also hidden ideological meanings behind those written words. The study also shows that these ideological meanings are clear expressions of the representation of opinions of the people.

Haiyan (2013), through pragmatics, evaluates the phenomenon of metaphorization in English newspaper headlines. With relevance theory as framework, the study makes an explanation of the processing of metaphor as the stimulus adopted by reporters to achieve optimal relevance in communication, as well as the strategy to fulfill their writing purpose. Abba and Nasiru (2015) through speech act investigate newspaper headline reports of Daily Trust and The Nation on Boko Haram attacks, with a view to identifying the types of speech acts used as well as their implication to

language use. Abba and Nasiru conclude that the ideological positions of the papers are not portrayed in their headlines.

Ismail (2016), through the techniques of presupposition and entailment, interrogates the potential of semantics and pragmatic of BBC news headlines. Using the modules introduced by Van Dijk, the study attempts to explicate on the interrelationship of pragmatics and semantics in terms of avoiding misunderstanding and miscommunication between the speaker/writer and hearer/reader. The study shows clearly that language users depend completely on their general knowledge, background knowledge, and shared knowledge to reach to a good interpretation of a text and that Semantic and pragmatic knowledge which are part of the users' cognition of their language play an important role in interpreting cues and markers in the headlines as well as convey the idea that the writer wants to say.

This present study complements other studies by investigating the nominal groups of selected Nigerian newspaper headlines. It lends credence to the claim that NGPs are indeed viable linguistic features that aid the construction of meaning as well as pragmatic acts in unmasking the ideological positions of reporters in newspaper headlines. Like in the words of Lyons (1977:249) "... the function of language tends to be reflected in its grammatical and lexical structure, which interrelates sentences with the feature of situation of the utterance", hence, the grammatical level is as important as any other level of linguistic description because a writer essentially selects lexico- grammatical options to encode his textual message. Language is a social tool for the construal of meaning and ideology and NGPs as pragmatic features are not exceptions.

3. The nominal group: an overview

Creativity is a salient feature of human language and group type constitutes a unique aspect of this overture. In systemic functional linguistics, it is placed third on the hierarchy of the grammatical units in the language. Thompson (2000: 166) affirms that group constitutes the immediate structure after clause in the rank ladder. Just as the clause has functional slots (e.g. Subject; Actor; Theme) which are filled by groups and phrases, so does this grammatical element. It can be analyzed in terms of the functional slots or properties that it offers. Some linguistic scholars believe that a group is synonymous to a phrase in other grammatical model while others assert that a group is not a phrase. To them, a phrase is different from a group in that, the former is a contraction of a clause, whereas the latter is an expansion of a word (Arnold,1985: 159). In all, group is as fundamental as any other level of linguistic description because of their mutual inclusiveness.

In systemic functional linguistics, a nominal group is a group of words which expresses an entity. It is "typically a group with a noun (or pronoun) as its head." (Bloor & Bloor 2004: 31). The nominal group can function as subject and complement in a clause and can also function as the complement of a preposition in a prepositional phrase. In systemic functional linguistics, three functional components or metafunctions are realized in language and the group structure is interpreted in terms of the ideational metafunctions. The ideational component in group structure is divided into two: experiential and logical. The logical component defines the logical-semantic relations in the group, and the relationship in the nominal group is that of modification.

The element before the head is called the premodifier and that which comes after the head is the postmodifier often inferred as qualifier. Therefore, on the logical component, three positions can then be identified: premodifier, head and postmodifier— (M) H (Q), with 'H' as obligatory element while 'M' and 'Q' are optional elements. This means that there are four structural possibilities of the nominal group, these are: the 'H' type which is made up of only a nominal head, the 'MH' type, with modification(s) before the head, the 'HQ' type with qualification(s) after the head and the 'MHQ' type with all the basic elements present (i.e. the pre and post modifiers, plus the head).

Halliday (2004: 320) identifies six experiential functions in a nominal group and these are: Deictic, Numerative, Epithet, Classifier, Thing and Qualifier. The elements which realize the premodifier on the logic sub-function are divided on the basis of their experiential roles into Deictic, Numerative, Epithet and Classifier. Deictic has a pointing function and is usually realized by determiner, a possessive noun or a possessive pronoun.

Deictic element indicates whether or not some specific head is intended; and if so, which one. Hence, deictic can be specific or non-specific. Specific deictic may specify the intended head by one of two possible ways: either demonstratively by means of a reference to some kind of proximity to the speaker using 'this', 'these' (Morley, 1985:47), or by possession, by reference to person as defined from the standpoint of the speaker (my, your, our, his, her, its, their; and so on) . All these have the function of identifying a particular head that is being referred to. Non-specific deictic on the other hand, signals that the hearer or reader is not assumed, or does not need to be familiar with the specific identity of the head at that point (Thompson, 2000: 182). It then assumes that the Deictic slot is not needed for identification, rather it is used instead to indicate what quantity of the head is involved. Examples are 'all', 'some', 'non', 'both' etc.

Numerative function can be realized by the word class numeral which includes cardinal and ordinal numbers. In other words, it indicates the number or quantity of the head, either in exact terms, 'three', 'twenty', or in inexact terms, 'many', 'much'; or it specifies order, 'first', 'fifth" (Halliday, 1994:183). Epithet indicates the features of the modified item. Epithet indicates some quality of the head and is typically realized by adjective e.g. old, long, blue, fast. Epithet may be an expression of the speaker's subjective attitude towards the head, e.g. splendid, silly, fantastic, or it is an objective property of it, e.g. red, tall, huge (Morley, 1985:89). Classifier has the function of sub classifying the modified item into a subclass of such item. Whereas thing conflates with the head and is usually realized by a noun or pronoun. Qualifier (the element which follows the thing) conflates with premodifier and is usually realized by prepositional phrases and embedded clauses. Creative writers like in news reporting deploy nominal group as choice from their linguistic list in order to project their ideas. This praxis contributes to the general meaning they try to convey.

4. Methodology

The data for this study consists of fourteen headlines collected from five Nigerian Newspapers published between 2011, 2015, 2016 and 2017. The papers are *Daily Trust*, *Vanguard*, *The Nation*, *The Guardian*, and *Daily Sun*, and the nominal group patterns were examined for their grammatical

peculiarities and functions. The study uses the method and insight of Halliday systemic functional linguistics along with Searle's speech act of pragmatics in the description and interpretation of the selected NGP headlines, indicating their typologies, surface structures and how they reflect the attitude or belief of the reporter. In other words, the study attempts to explain how NGPs reflect the attitudes of the reporter on those whose interest is being served and those whose interest is being undermined. Pragmatics and speech acts theory see texts as forms of social action that occur in complex social contexts. Systemic functional linguistics shows how linguistic forms can be systematically related to social functions. Our choice of analysis in this study is primarily a pointer that nominal groups are rich language patterns for pragmatic explication.

5. Conceptual clarification

The concept of pragmatics according to Onuigbo (2007:317) was first developed by Pierre in 1931 and was amplified by Dewey. However, the origin of modern pragmatics is attributable to Charles Morris (1938), a British philosopher who was concerned with the study of the Science of Signs or "Semiotics". According to Morris, Semiotics consisted of three (3) broad branches namely: syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Syntax or syntactics deals with the relations of sign to one another, semantics deals with the relations of signs to objects while pragmatics deals with the relations of signs to interpreters (Morris, 1938:19). This establishes the fundamental place of language study in pragmatics.

In an attempt to define pragmatics, quite a good number of critics have thrown more light on it. Levinson (1983:9) opines that pragmatics is "the study of those aspects of the relationship between language and context that are relevant to the writing of grammars." Our interest here is mainly in the inter-relation of language and principles of language use that are context dependent. Leech (1983:6) opines that pragmatics is "the study of meaning in relation to speech situations". The speech situation enables the speaker use language to achieve a particular effect on the mind of the hearer." To Onuigbo (2007:318), pragmatics accounts for what people use language to do and the linguistic features employed in doing it. Yule (1996:127) affirms pragmatics as "the study of intended speaker's meaning."

In recent times, extended researches in cultural studies and social discourse have argued in favour of discourse pragmatics rather than the traditional linguistic pragmatics. To them, one should also be concerned with the fact that social conventions and ideologies, define peoples roles, identities and language performances; people simply communicate in some particular ways as the society determines and that people can manipulate language to achieve certain purposes, because in some circumstances they are actually ruled by social conventions. If these were the cases, it becomes validated that in pragmatics, discourse/utterance rather than sentence is stressed. It becomes imperative that a pragmatic analyst seeks to explain what communicators actually do with language whether consciously or unconsciously. Communication is not merely an event, or something that happens: it is functional, purposive and designed to bring about some effect.

Systemic functional linguistic (SFL) also pays adequate attention to how language works in texts and contexts. In Systemic functional linguistics, every act of language is an act of meaning. Its theoretic principle is that language is a social semiotic system or network of systems and that every communicative act involves choices from a describable set of options for the construction of meaning. This also infers that that language is to be interpreted in terms of its relationship to social structure. (Halliday,1985:3-4). SFL model provides an in-depth linguistic analysis of NGPs by authenticating context with the supporting linguistic components in the text, thereby, unveiling a better understanding of the constructions of meaning in the discourse. This is what this present study hopes to achieve. So far, there seems to be some impressive consensus between pragmatics and systemic functional linguistics. Both theories define the relationship of meaning to the context in which it occurs, in other words, they match functions with particular language choices in a particular context.

6. Context, utterance and pragmatics

Context is a requisite concept in pragmatics because pragmatics has been defined by many scholars as context-based meaning. There are diverse types of context—interpersonal, institutional, and situational/sociocultural context. All these forms play significant roles in any discourse. The notion that nominal group is a viable category of language to create meaning in texts is the central premise of this study. Creating linguistic meaning or achieving communication between language participants are a dynamic process involving units, such as the form, context and function of the utterance. A discussion of meaning, therefore, within a linguistic context, usually examines meaning as communicated by the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic values of an utterance. Pragmatics is the study of utterances and the contexts in which they are performed. The meaning of an utterance enables speakers to use language to articulate their intentions.

An utterance, therefore, becomes meaningful, firstly, when the speaker uses it to express a thought; and secondly, in the receptive act, when hearers interpret the utterance and assign meaning to it from their own knowledge and experience. Thus, between the speaker and the hearer, there exists the negotiation of the meaning of an utterance within a communicative event. In linguistics, context plays tremendous roles of disambiguation of meanings as well as in understanding the actual meaning of words. It serves as the channel through which the language of an utterance creates the intention or function of the utterance. Every utterance is made within some specific context. By context, we do not just refer to the physical context, but to everything that surrounds the making of the utterance. These include what is going on in the place where the utterance is made, the knowledge of the speaker and the addressee of the culture in which they are operating (cultural context), knowledge of the expectations and discursive practices of the people among whom the utterance is being made, especially as it relates to the social roles and relationships (social context).

Child and Fowler (2006:33-34) define context in the literary point of view as the meaning of a word as it is used in the language, and that, the interpretation of an utterance is dependent on a knowledge of the context which it occurs. Fowler (1986:89) recognizes three types of context: context of utterance, cultural context and context of reference. Context of utterance refers to the situation within which discourse is conducted. This includes the physical surrounding; the location of the

participants in relation to one another, the channel employed, be it speech or writing. Context of culture includes the network of social and economic conventions and institutions, the social attitudes and ideologies forming the culture. The context of reference is known as “the topic or subject matter of a text. It is evident in a discourse that the structure of verbal behaviour differs from one type of context to another.

According to Halliday (1978:143), context of situation can be realized by: mode, field and tenor. For Austin (1962: 100), words are to some extent to be “explained” by the context in which they are designed to be or actually have been spoken in a linguistic interchange. Lyons (1981:218) argues that context refers to a set of proposition in which new propositions can be evaluated for truth and added to the context or rejected untrue. The main point is that context is a vital aspect of language use, as this study shall demonstrate that the true meaning of a text can be thought of as a relationship between its linguistic elements and whatever contextual evidence is available for clarifying it. Language is articulated in discourse and discourse is shaped in context and context in return is equally shaped in text.

Language creates contexts and contexts create the possibilities for interpretation and remove multiple ambiguities that utterances would have had if they had occurred in isolation. The study of the context of an utterance is based on the notion that utterances perform different functions or meaning because of their background and circumstance. Hence, understanding the context of any discourse becomes fundamental in linguistic studies, as it instigates variation of meanings and also gives us valuable information towards the understanding of why and how a particular word varies in meaning when used in a text. Context, therefore, is very useful in getting an understanding of an individual’s or even corporate organization’s ideological stance.

7. Data presentation, analysis and discussion of headlines

Headline 1. Red Card to Herdsmen

Daily Sun Tuesday, November 29, 2017. P22.

The surface structural categorization of the NGP headline is:

Red Card	to Herdsmen
M ^(e) H	Q

Headline 1 is typically a populist headline. Populist headlines are considered as headlines which advocate the course or interest of the ordinary people or less privileged. Consequently, any newspaper which represents the interest of the general public, particularly the less-privileged is referred to as populist newspapers. A close study of this headline illuminates the reportage as informing and declarative in its essence. The NGP headlines showcase that declarative act can be fashioned in different forms in texts. Declarative act is an act that also unveils some levels of powers, rights, and influences. They often change the state of the world in an immediate way. The ideological

meaning of the discourse structure is generated and communicated through the concept “red card”. It foregrounds the entire text. The epithet ‘red’, for instance, is highly emotional and often heralds phenomena such as war, danger, rage, anger and determination. The meaning of the context is well captured through the combination of the modifier, the head and the qualifier (MHQ).

The lexical item ‘red card’ is often associated to the domain of sports. It indicates dismissal from the pitch. The NGP headline initiates a discourse that creates awareness. The framing in the headline is provocative. It denotes violent protest as well as vehement refusal to accommodate. This lends credence to Saussure (1966:2) charter statement about semiotics that language is a system of signs that express ideas, and is therefore comparable to a system of writing. The NGP headline seems to assume that the declaration is based on a court verdict or an established consensus by those who are involved that the herdsmen should vacate the land in question and the reporter needs not to waste any time in heralding it for the public to be abreast with the latest injunction. This declaration or decision may not be far from the recent claims by people on the activities of herdsmen in their communities.

Headline 2. Herdsmen attack capable of breaking Nigeria— Falae
Saturday Sun, September 16, 2017. P11

The surface structural categorization of the NGP headline is :

Herdsmen	attack	capable of breaking Nigeria
M ^(c)	H	Q ^(comp)

This is also a populist headline marked from an assertive point. However, there are three implications to note in this headline. Firstly, the headline shows that there is an attack perpetuated by herdsmen, secondly, the attack is incessant, that is, it has continued overtime, and thirdly, it unveils to the reader government’s inability to have curbed the mayhem caused by this sect. With this, the headline is projected to remind the government the need to take a prompt decision in order to eradicate this problem of distortion. The headline serves as a red light, a note of warning to the government to brace up to the threat that is capable of breaking the nation.

Headline 3. Private jets galore at IBB’s daughter’s wedding
Daily Trust, Saturday May 13, 2017. P3.

The surface structural categorization of the NGP headline is :

Private	jets	galore	at IBB’s daughter’s wedding
M ^(epithet)	M ^(c)	H	Q ^(Adverbial)

Headline 3 is also a populist headline. Pragmatically, the headline is more of vilification than praise. The reporting act is tactically informing. Tact proves to be one of the most appropriate ways in communicating or reporting a message that projects the speaker’s intention. According to Adebite (2000), tact or tactics by implication, is a means of interpreting the discourse value of information encoded in a word or a phrase and its relationship with other linguistic items which precede or follow the items as well as some other non-linguistic factors of communication based on the communicative

context of an utterance. To him, “discourse value” is simply the meaning which the speaker or writer expects his hearer/reader to decode or interpret. Hence, the meaning of a text is determined by the linguistic behaviour of the language context. Every instance of language use is produced from an ideological perspective and the choice of words is fundamental in providing readers with cues for interpreting events.

A close study of the headline reveals that the NGP is ideologically driven, showcasing to the reader a cacophonous massive display of wealth. The ideology of the text is couched in the discourse structure $M^{(e)}M^{(c)}H$ —‘Private jets galore’. The structure tactically incites the reader making him or her arrive at his own judgments concerning these set of participants at the wedding. The choice of words, actually defines how we perceive actions and the intentions of the participants in an event, thereby, conveying the message that the producer of the text intended the readers to receive. In a nut shell, the language of the NGP headline, pragmatically, expresses the reporter’s negative evaluation of the context.

Headline 4. The Tinubu Factor in Yoruba and Nigeria affairs
The Guardian, Friday May 19, 2017 P18.

The surface structural categorization of the NGP is:

The	Tinubu	Factor	in Yoruba and Nigeria affairs
$M^{(D)}$	$M^{(C)}$	H	$Q^{(comp)}$

According to Searle, speech is the basic unit of language used to express meaning, an utterance that expresses an intention. We observed three things concerning the language deployed by this NGP headline. Firstly, it is pro-government. Secondly, the notion of its compositionality, and thirdly, the language or communicative act or pragmatic act is expressively informing, that is, it reveals the speaker’s intention on the figure being spoken about. Searle sees expressive speech acts as communicative acts that reveal the speaker’s attitude about objects and facts of the world. In other words, expressive acts unveil how the speaker feels about a state or situation. Expressive acts have strong interpersonal function. Note, the NGP headline consists of $M^{(d)}M^{(c)}H Q$. That is modifiers that are determiner and classifier respectively, a head and a qualifier that is an adverbial complement.

The definite article, ‘the’ in the text is to establish some level of definiteness, knowingness and uniqueness. The speaker proves to know the figure he projects. However, definiteness is only a measure of uniqueness within the mind of the speaker and perhaps the listener or reader. A close study of the conceptual interpretation of the grammatical metaphor ‘The Tinubu factor’ clarifies why the ‘Tinubu influence’ is needed in the polity of the Nigerian nation. To the writer, the leadership problem in the nation demands that we pay attention to rescuing what is handed over to us in terms of leaders and those who can achieve what is needed towards nation building. To him, Tinubu’s significance straddles not only the Yoruba but also the nation at large. He sees Tinubu as one leader out of many who has been involved in the turbulence of making Nigeria work as a nation. For instance, any attempt

at narrating the turning point of the governance story that transformed Lagos, would have to factor the Tinubu governorship years into the Lagos governance history.

Hence, the writer’s ideology is captured in the grammatical metaphor ‘The Tinubu factor’. The use of grammatical metaphor seems to be a common trait by headline tabloids. Here, it helps to showcase the writer’s ideology or subjective view on the figure he speaks about. Consequently, the communicative act which is more of eulogy than criticism becomes expressive in its ideological essence.

Headline 5. 1963 Constitution ideal Grundnorm, says Middle Belt
The Guardian, Sunday September 10 2017. P2.

For Headline 5, the surface structural categorization of the NGP is:

1963	Constitution	ideal Grund norm,
M ⁽ⁿ⁾	H	Q ^(comp)

Headline deploys a direct speech method. This is to show that the statement is directly from someone. Newspaper headlines use diverse indicators to show when a speech is direct, such as the use of the hyphen immediately after the headline or the use of the verb marker such as ‘says’ like the headline above. A close look at this headline unveils that there is a calculative attempt by the writer or reporter to manipulate the language to serve as an NGP to suit his intention. This again supports our claim that NGP is a language type. Ordinarily, the structure should be : 1963 Constitution < is an > ϕ ideal Grundnorm. The lexes ‘is’ and ‘an’ are intentional elided to make the language function as NGP. The headline can be argued on one hand as an elitist headline and on the other hand as anti-government headline. However, our interest is the language used and as well as what it advocates, and to whose interest.

The headline definitely serves the interest of those who are opting for regionalism or true federalism. The advocates see 1963 constitution which was before the coup that brought General Aguyi Ironsi to power as a solution to diverse acrimonies presently plaguing the country. This infers that the headline advocates for restructuring. It is assertively structured. The NGP is characterized by implicit assumption. Consequently, it implies that the present constitution in place is lopsided, hence, for the nation to be sane, and for the interest of the people to be adequately represented in the Presidential System of Government, the nation must return to the 1963 constitution.

Headline 6: Deployment of soldiers in Kanu’s house illegal— Falana
The Punch, Thursday, September 14, 2017. P 20.

The surface structural categorization of the NGP headline is :

Deployment	of soldiers in Kanu’s house illegal
H	Q^(comp) Q^(comp)

Headline 6 is equally a populist headline directed to indictment or slam at the recent action taken by the federal government to get Kanu the leader of IPOB arrested. The speaker sees the government’s action as brute force. The headline is assertive. It unveils to the reader that the arrest of Kanu is not within the jurisdiction of the army but the police. The lexical item ‘illegal’ carries the ideological underpinning. Pragmatically, it can be further interpreted as a call for a demilitarization of the country. Note the elision of the copula verb ‘is’ by the headline. This is intentionally done by the reporter to have the entire grammatical structure function as NGP.

Headline 7: Biafra referendum not Possible — Oko Obla
Saturday Sun, July 1 2017. P48.

The surface structural categorization of the NGP headline is :

Biafra Referendum	not possible
M H	Q^(comp)

Headline 7 is conspicuously adversative marked from an assertive point. Its adverseness signals a relationship contrary to expectation. The headline is a pro-government headline with a direct speech method that should have read: ‘Biafra Referendum <is>ϕ not possible’. However, there is also the elision of the copula verb ‘is’ to have the headline function as NGP. This linguistic phenomenon cannot be over emphasized in this study. We have ascertained that one of the purposes for such linguistic manipulation is a sure index that NGP is a language type. The act here is negative assertion as some linguists would put it. However, the NGP is structured to gain attention. The purpose of assertive act is to convey information about some state of affairs of the world from one agent, the speaker, to another, the hearer. Assertive acts are not constrained as far as their propositional content is concerned. According to Havertake (1969:18), they may express “any proposition”. Assertive acts may include amongst others, stating, suggesting, boasting, complaining, and claiming. To the speaker, the demand for a referendum on a separate state of Biafra is constitutionally impossible and is captured by the NGP with MHQ structure.

Headline 8: Nigeria’s break up possible — Mbazulike Amaechi
The Sun, March 25 2017. P42.

The surface structural categorization of the NGP headline is :

Nigeria’s break up	Possible
M H	Q^(comp)

This headline is assertive and as well as anti-government. Anti-Government headlines act against the government. One interesting thing about this headline is that it is a counter headline to that

of 7. The NGP directly captures the statement by a foremost nationalist and outspoken elder statesman, Chief Mbazulike Amaechi whose position and argument unveils the possibility of Igbo secession. To him, such assertion is tenable unless the needful is addressed. In other word, it is an advice and a warning at the same time to the government to address the present agitation of the people of Biafra if the country must continue to retain its present status as one nation.

Headline 9 : Anti-Buhari Forces behind Calls for Restructuring—Ex-Minister Oyelose
Saturday Sun, July 1, 2017. P44.

The surface structural categorization of the NGP headline is

Anti-Buhari Forces	behind calls for restructuring
M H	Q ^(comp) Q ^(comp)

Headline 9 is a pro-government headline. This is obvious in the language. The speech is a direct type. His statement indicates that people who cannot withstand Buhari’s anti-corruption war are those singing the praises of restructuring, thereby disintegrating the nation.

Headline 10: Our Economy in Trouble
Vanguard, Thursday July 7 2011. P1

The surface structural categorization of the NGP headline is :

Our Economy	in Trouble
M H	Q ^(comp)

The tone of this headline seems anti-government. The headline is informing and at the same time asserting. The NGP language is intentionally constructed to create conflict. It attacks and exposes the government for their ineptitude and incapability to manage the country’s resources. One major feature of power relation on the pages of the newspaper is the power of persuasion, which is often used in the construction of headlines. A close reading of headlines in print discourses shows that all of them set out to arouse the attention of readers, but with focus on different aspects of the news. Here, the assertiveness is dramatically constructed to keep the tension of the polity high as the state of the economy is brought to the fore of the public by the reporter. Indirectly, the headline is condemning, disapproving, underrating and inciting. In other words, the headline reminds the government to brace up to their responsibility if the country’s economy must be sensible. The language of the NGP can also be implied that the present government is corrupt, hence the situation is helpless.

Headline 11: The Southern Kaduna Killings: The inside story
Daily Trust, Saturday, January 14, 2017. P4-5.

The surface structural categorization of the NGP headline is :

The Southern Kaduna Killings	The inside story
M M M H	M M H

Headline 11 serves the interest of the government. That is, it is a pro-government headline. One interesting thing about this headline is that, it has a pointer. Headlines with pointers are those 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 (Taiwo, 2004:326). This headline has an historical background. The information given by the headline capped in MMMH on one hand and MMH on the other hand, certainly presupposes certain stock of knowledge that deters anybody who is not familiar with the field of reference from decoding the content. The religious setting in the country assumes that the North is largely dominated by Moslems, while the South by Christian. Several issues are naturally woven around this dichotomy, which often precipitate religious riots at the slightest opportunity like the headline above.

Consequently, the reader who has been following the trend of event in the media understands or knows who the headline is trying to pacify. The idea is to correct the misconception that the Kaduna riot was intentionally plotted to eliminate the Christians in Southern Kaduna. Hence, this headline seems to be a means through which those who have lost trust in the government because of the mayhem will be pacified. It is also published to cover up government lapses of not responding quickly to the crisis before it degenerated.

Headline 12: Al-Mustapha a pathological liar
Sunday Sun, June 11, 2017. P50.

The surface structural categorization of the NGP headline is :

Al-Mustapha	a pathological liar.
H	Q ^(comp)

NGP headlines interest us because of its assertive constructiveness. The headline is a direct attack by Ayo Opadokun, a defunct NADECO (National Democratic Coalition) scribe/ secretary. He chastises the then National Security Officer of late Sani Abacha, Major Hamza Mustapha over recent disclosure of his possession of a video clip on how MKO Abiola died. Note, the essence of the assertion is to convey information or to debunk a claim. However, the statement or assertion seems to be characterized with face threatening act (FTAs). If you say things that make people embarrassed or uncomfortable, or something that threatens another person's self-image, you are said to have employed a face threatening act. The act deployed here, also indicates that the speaker has some measure of power that equal the person being addressed.

Pathology, from medical sciences has to do with disease situations. To classify a person a pathological liar implies that one would likely treat anything uttered by that person with skepticism and wariness. This is the implication of the headline that Al-Mustapha is infested with ‘lie disease’ and that the nation should discard his claim. To the speaker, he still sees the then National Security Officer as tool to propagate the government’s bidding. The headline can at some level be attributed as a populist headline.

Headline 13: EFCC Bose a Perennial Offender ----DSS
Saturday Sun, March 25, 2017. P9.

The surface structural categorization of the NGP headline is :

EFCC Bose	a Perennial Offender
M H	Q ^(comp)

The NGP of headline 13 is also a direct speech. The use of the hyphen is an indicator that the DSS is responsible for this. The NGP with MHQ type is equally confrontational and provocative. The illocutionary act here is declarative, although with some level of judgment. The integration of the lexical items anchored by the Qualifier (Q) shows that the offence has gone beyond mere accusation. It has become an established fact. The adjective ‘perennial’ showcases that the offence by the offender has persisted, hence, he should be prosecuted or face legal trial. It is the ‘Q’ that anchors the declaration.

There are two things concerning this headline. Firstly, it is intentionally structured to serve as a counter-headline, perhaps to debunk the stance or position of the presidency concerning the figure involved. Secondly, it is intentionally structured to redirect and garner the attention as well as the support of the reader or public against the figure in question. To the DSS (Department of State Security), the office of the Ag Chairman of EFCC should be occupied by an impeccable character with proven integrity and capacity to lead the nation in the fight against graft in low and high places. Pragmatically, the NGP headline subsumes that the figure involved is not that kind of officer. Therefore, he should be discredited for the post.

Headline 14: Theatre of Flood at every drop
The Guardian Friday May 12 2017. P10

The structure of the NGP headline is:

Theatre	of flood at every drop
H	Q Q ^(Adv)

This is a populist headline. The headline is metaphorical. In addition to its topicality, the headline is characterized by an expressive act of sharp criticism. The headline unveils to the reader the

gross negligence and ineptitude of the government to the environment. The language commands our empathy. The magnitude of the language in the context reminds us of one of these motion pictures that dramatize a scene that is pitiable, unbearable, devastating and painful. It unveils impassable roads after every drop of rain. Note the writer’s usage of ‘every drop’ not down pour’. This is to indicate that even at the slightest form of rainfall; the roads are not motorable, much less when it pours heavily. Hence, the pragmatic act of the headline is that of condemning, criticizing and blaming. The lexical item which serves as an adverbial complement is imbued into the text to mock the government and also to indicate precision. It intensifies the context of what is being described. The NGP, overtly, captures the government as charlatans for being less concerned about the environment and the citizens.

Headline 15: Randy adults on rampage.

Saturday Sun March 25, 2017. P14.

The NGP structure is :

Randy	adults	on rampage
M ^(classifier)	H	Q

The discourse structure of headline 15 is informative. Here, the NGP is deployed as a linguistic sign by the reporter to herald or designate a phenomenon of reality. Our definition of ‘linguistic sign’ in this study infers to any unit of language (morpheme, word, phrase, or sentence) used to designate objects or phenomena of reality. The metaphor ‘randy adults’ in the context is implied. In other words, it goes beyond mere name. Pragmatically, it infers lecherousness. The way people use language actually goes beyond what they mean. Here the writer uses ‘randy adults’ to refer to persons given to sexual violence. The NGP is metaphorically foregrounded to become a language type or adage to showcase the alarming proportion of sexual assaults by men on under aged females and also for warning. Headlines 16, 17 and 18 x-ray NGPs that serve as anchors to performative phrases.

Headline 16: Buhari to Military: defeat ideologies of mindless killings

The Nation, Sunday September 17 2017. P8

The NGP structure is:

Buhari	to Military defeat ideologies of mindless killings
H	Q

Language, obviously, provides articulated means for differences in power in social hierarchical structures”. (Wodak, 2001:11). Thus analysis of language is a great tool to investigate power relation such as dominance and inequality in media discourses. NGP as linguistic and discourse mechanism plays a fundamental role in the comprehension of headlines 16, 17 and 18. Headlines 16, 17 and 18 are examples of directive acts with pointers precipitated by different tones. Directive act does have a purpose when the speaker has authority to what is said, if it does not have the authority, then, the execution of the instruction given to the addressee becomes invalid. In headline 16, the NGP anchors

the acts. It helps the reader to know who gives the instruction and who takes the instruction or to whom the instruction is given. The directive act in headline 16 is that of command or order. Power is being exercised here. The given information which is the NGP with the HQ structure, in headline 16, actually anchors what the speaker wants to be carried out, and this is projected in the performative phrase— ‘defeat ideologies of mindless killings’. The metaphor ‘ideologies of mindless killings’ refer to enemies of the nations whose identities and motivations are unknown. To the speaker, such ideology should not be accommodated or spared at all cost.

Headline 17: Buhari to lawyers: join fight against crooks
The Nation, August 23 2015. P1.

The surface structural categorization of the NGP headline is :

Buhari	to lawyers
H	Q (comp)

As indicated above, headline 17 has another dimension of directedness. The language used is polite unlike headline 16. To ensure success in the war against corruption, the addresser has obeyed the politeness principle which assumes that the interactants behave politely to one another since people respect one another in an interactive speech event. The performative verb ‘join’ is a polite verb unlike the verb ‘defeat’. Headline 17 is characterized by a directive act that is more of a request. Request, as Trosborg (1995: 187) claims, is considered as “an illocutionary act whereby a speaker conveys to a hearer that he/she wants the hearer to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker”. The NGP headline above certainly draws our attention to one of the prevailing societal issues in the country— corruption. The NGP headline indicates a speaker performing a directive act that is more of a request or an invitation than an order and which he would like to be complied with in his favour or benefit. Here, the given information anchors the request structured in performative phrase as well— ‘join fight against crooks’. This means that the lawyers to whom the request/ invitation is addressed to, should help join in the anti-graft war. Crooks in the context refer to the offenders.

Headline 18. Senate to Osinbajo: sack Magu or face the consequence
Daily Trust, Wednesday, July 5 2017. P1.

The surface structural categorization of the NGP headline is :

Senate	to Osinbajo
H	Q (comp)

Headline 18 projects a politics of power play. This means that the real politics of leadership in the country are decided by few persons. Hence, the contextual setting of headline 18 draws our attention to this fact. To some persons, perhaps the elite, the fear of Magu seems to be the beginning of wisdom. Consequently, there must be resistance by all means to dismiss his eligibility for the post of the Chairman of the EFCC. In other words, the interest of few persons are been served. The directive act in this headline is that of command or order. Power is being exercised here. The given information

which is the NGP with the HQ structure, actually anchors the consequence projected in the performative phrase. The ‘consequence’ unveils a warning. In other words, if Osinbajo fails to heed to the order or instruction given by the Senate, the consequence or punishment, is impeachment. The ways NGP headline deploys directive act is quite different from that of a natural language. NGP headlines with directive act are often confrontational and they appear as blunt as possible as in the case here.

Headline 19. THE AMBODE SIGNATURE ...

- Driving the Lagos dream. *Sunday Sun*, July31, 2016 P25

the surface structural categorization of the NGP is :

THE AMBODE SIGNATURE	Driving the Lagos dream
M ^(d) M ^(c) H	Q ^(comp)

Headline 19 is a pro-government headline with a assertive tone. A close study of the text unveils that the writer’s ideology is embedded in the grammatical metaphor ‘The Ambode Signature’. Grammatical metaphor is one of the key concepts in systemic functional linguistics, and metaphorical pragmatic-acts mean something other than their literal sense in some sense of meaning as in the headline described. The foregrounded element presupposes to the reader that ‘Ambode’ the present governor of Lagos state is actually endorsed by political players of Lagos to succeed Fashola. In view of this, the entire headline eulogizes the incumbent governor of Lagos state for a work well done after the endorsement. A critical insight into the modifier article ‘the’ indicates some level of knowingness in terms of trust and capability, and from the ‘Q’ element- ‘driving the Lagos dream’, the meaning of the context is deduced that the present governor has not failed all those who have endorsed him out of trust as Fashola’s successor.

Headline 20. Xenophobic attacks : South Africa ungrateful to Nigeria.
Vanguard, March 1 2017. P1.

the surface structural categorization of the NGP is :

Xenophobic attacks	South Africa ungrateful to Nigeria
M ^(e) H	H Q

This is a populist headline expressively marked out for the interest of the less privileged. As an expressive act, the NGPs project the speaker’s attitude as that of regret and disappointment considering Nigeria’s role in the fight against apartheid. The headline indicates a disheartening context, a condition that demands an urgent response from the federal government and all stakeholders to fully engage the South African government on how best to checkmate this ugly trend from reoccurring. Newspaper headlines like every other aspects of media messages are often subjected to linguistic manipulations in other to create their messages. Hence, the structural outlay of this headline is manipulated by the reporter in other to clarify his message. The headline has a pointer as well. The

syntactic manipulation is also an index that the linguistic phenomenon is a recurrent decimal in newspaper headline.

There are two parts to the headline — the given information and the comment that follows. The given information, which is MH, presents very poignantly the condition of the Nigerians in South Africa while the comment which is the HQ, portrays the regret and utter disappointment indicating how the speaker or writer feels about the issue. The NGP is constructed this way in order to unveil how the writer wants the reader to see the issue being propagated as well his angle of judgment.

Conclusion

In this study, through a pragmatics investigation, we have ascertained that NGP is indeed a language type used by selected Nigerian newspaper headlines. The study has also showcased this linguistic element as a viable language pattern in the construction and interpretation of some speech acts. Although the newspaper headlines selected as texts for analysis in this study may not have been adequate for this study to construe hypothesis of any sort. However, we assume that the study is a litmus test for further pragmatic research that will throw more light on the efficacy of the nominal group element as viable category for achieving speech acts in any speech situation. With the method applied so far, it is obvious that pragmatics is a practical exercise that unveils many dimensions of language use and also the different levels of meaning they generate in a context.

In this study, through a pragmatic exercise, we are confronted with how nominal groups are constructed to unveil a writer's attitude and intention on those whose interest are being served or undermined. The study equally affirms to us that every pragmatic exercise provides a better opportunity to the comprehension of the status of language, the way it looks and what it means to the reader or hearer.

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