

Persuasive Strategies in Media Texts; A Comparative Study of Two News Papers

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Abstract

This paper examines the persuasive strategies in media texts; a comparative study of two Newspapers. It has been observed that media men and women make their audience (listeners, viewers or readers) to believed and reason with them in what they say even when they know what they are broadcasting is not reality. In order to study this phenomenon, four research questions were formulated; 1) what are the identifiable persuasive strategies in the Newspapers under study? 2) what are the purposes for using these strategies? 3) How does the use of persuasive strategies in these newspapers help to achieve specific outcome? 4) what is the role of the audience in this process? We used the critical discourse Analysis theory in this study. Data was collected from the two selected newspaper; Cameroon Tribune No. 10602/6801 published June 4th 2014 and the Guardian Post No. 0608 published in May 29, after using the data analytical tools and methods, it was discovered that the two newspapers manipulate language to convince their audience to buy their point of view.

Keywords: Persuasive strategies; media text; Gaudian Post; Cameroon Tribune.

1. Introduction

Media and language are interwoven as it is mostly through the use of language that communication is achieved. Humans have realized that language is an essential tool in giving instant satisfaction (psychological), of convincing, of persuading. But appealing to both the orator or writer and the audience in that, each media manipulates words and other media texts through their productions to sway their audience to their intended directions. In this context, language can never be used arbitrarily, uninterestingly as long as it is skillfully used to attain desired outcomes. Therefore, some media men and women make their audience (listeners, viewers or readers) to immediately believe and reason with them in what they say, even when they know it is not the reality. Whenever and wherever a media man or woman delivers information, his or her expectations and those of his audience are high.

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As shown by Thomas and Wareing [34;39].Media men and women manipulate language and other media text which enables them to exert great force on the preconceptions, beliefs, aspirations and fears of the masses to the extent of causing people to accept sometimes false assertions as true postulate, or even to support policies contrary to their interest.

Drawing inspiration from McNair who says all forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives, that is to persuade and convince their audience, one would notice that media men and women manipulate language differently in specific context. This is to say they use various persuasive discourse strategies such as metaphor, three-part statement, the purposeful use of pronouns, contrastive pairs, lexical and syntactic repetitions and expression of ideology. Other strategies such as time, setting, period also help them to capture the attention of the audience.

It is therefore, in this guise that theories like the conceptual metaphor theory which focuses on some of the language patterns used by media men such as quasilegal, representation, and discourse analysis theory which focuses on the communicative events that involves language use in context analyzing two articles published treating of a similar issue published in two different newspapers; to see how these media use persuasive discourse in various forms to convince and capture the attention of their audience. The main preoccupation of our work is to examine if these media men and women are able to tell their audience what they are expecting to hear taking into considering the situation at hand.

The research study underpinning this study stems from the fact that, behind the apparent simplicity of media texts. There is a selective and intentional use of rhetoric devices which is necessarily the product of prior considerations and a thoughtful discourse elaboration. These media text always trigger varied reactions from audience to which they are directed. In most cases, such reactions are rather designed or anticipated by the authors themselves. The strategic and calculated manipulation of language such as the case with metaphors, contrastive pairs, three-part statements, purposive use of pronouns, lexical and syntactic repetition; and images are used empathically by media men and women to empower their arguments.

2. Research Questions

The following research questions aided throughout this study.

- 1 What are the identifiable persuasive strategies in the two news papers under study?
- 2 What are the identifiable purposes for using these strategies?
- 3 How does the use of persuasive strategies in these newspapers help to achieve specific outcomes?
- 4 What is the role of the audience in this process?

Considering Cameroons current social atmosphere, a comprehensive study of the ways in which the various media houses manipulates language and other parameters seems increasingly important for scholars, the masses and even politicians.

Scope of the Study

This study is limited to two publications of two Cameroonian newspapers; Cameroon tribune No 10602/6801 and The guardian post No 0608. Paralinguistic cues such as gestures and facial expressions which typically characterised spoken discourse could be analysed in this study but our focus is on text and the persuasive aspects found in them.

3. Definition of Concepts

Strategy

A strategy is a detailed plan for achieving success in situations such as war, politics and business. Strategy is also any way or means one uses in achieving desired outcomes. By this we mean how do these authors plan to achieve their aspirations and that of their audience?

Persuasive Strategies

To persuade is to make somebody to accept or believe something by giving him good reason for doing, accepting or believing. Meanwhile discourse is the use of language I, speech or writing. Lakoff [11] defines persuasive discourse as the non-reciprocal 'attempt or intention of one party to change the behavior, feelings, intentions, or viewpoints of another by communicative means. Some common examples include propaganda, religious sermons, advertising, and political rhetoric. With this in mind, persuasive discourse is thus the act of using speech or writing to convince somebody to accept your perception or view on a particular subject. Persuasive discourse strategy is therefore a detailed plan to achieve success by using speech or writing to convince somebody to accept your perception or view on a particular subject.

Perloff [5] defined persuasion as symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behaviour regarding an issue through the transmission of a message in an atmosphere of free choice. Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher and Baker [15;26], suggest that any spoken or written communication intended to persuade contains three key rhetorical elements; logos, the logic and reasoning in the message; ethos, the character, credibility and trustworthiness of the communicator and pathos, the emotional dimension.

Media Text

The media text is any media product; any description or representation of the world, fictional or otherwise, is an attempt to describe or to define reality. Therefore, a media text is any media product we wish to examine, whether it is a television programme, novel, play, a painting, a popular song, a poster, a latest fashion, advertisement elements, a film, article etc.

4. Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature

Critical Discourse Analysis Theory was appropriate for the analysis of this paper. Controlling discourse is the first way of controlling power, Teun van Dijk draws his inspiration from Michel Foucault's [11] order of discourse and Halliday's multifunctional linguistic theory which he later coins to critical discourse analysis theory. Dijk [4;7;11] studies Foucault's theory that discourse is a medium through which power relations produce speaking subject. He also argues that power and knowledge are interrelated and therefore every human relationship is a struggle and negotiation of power. He thus states that, power is always present and can both produce and constraint the truth. So, discourse according to Foucault is related to power as it operated by rules of exclusion. Since content is mostly cognition, that is, it has to do with our knowledge of social situations and institutions, and of how to use language in them, Van Dijk claims that each content controls a specific type of discourse, and each discourse has a specific type of content. Added is Rruth Wodak's [10], social-cognitive approach which is of importance in analyzing text.

Dijk [7] relates discourse, ideology and society to social power. He posits that, action is controlled by power through discourse when he says: 'we are able to influence people's minds say their knowledge and opinions, we indirectly may control (some of) their actions, as we know from persuasion and manipulation' the impossible can happen. By this assertion he means that, since language has the power of controlling people's minds and thought, it can thus control their actions as well since man reacts in consideration of what is in his mind and thought. Therefore, a media man or woman stands a better chance of influencing his audience, by controlling their minds and actions. Hence, it is on the basis of Dijk's notion of critical discourse analysis; which stipulates that access to discourse is a form of power and Wodak's differences between text and discourse that the articles aforementioned was analyzed since it takes into cognizance that discourses cannot be conceptualized let alone understood without the notion of particular context. For example, an author can influence his audience depending on his ability to use persuasive discuss strategies to make his audience believe in his ideology or ideas. This study argues that discourse is a social power which influences people's minds and actions.

Therefore, it is only in the course of answering the following questions that this study successfully analyzed the problem. These include:

- a How are media texts produced?
- b How do such discourses affect the minds and actions of the masses or audience, and what are the consequences of such actions?

To successfully achieve the above, this study considered some of those rhetorical features (language patterns) which appear to be regular in the language used by media men. They include; the purposive use of pronouns, three-part statements Thomas and Wareing, contrastive pairs Beard [132]. More details about these features are discussed below.

Three-Part Statement

Three-part statements present information in segments of three items to give additional emphasis to the points earlier mentioned by the writer or speaker. Charteris-Black says the first part is intended to instantiate an argument; the second emphasizes or answers the first while the third reinforces the first two and indicates the argument is ended assisting the audience probably to applaud for confirmation. Most of the time, it is usually simple words or simple phrases although there exist complex syntactic structures with longer sentence. This device engulfs three different items which does not change the fact that a single unit can be repeated three times to give further strengthens to the points advanced. This work accepts with Jones and Wareing [34;39] who argue that repeating certain phrases contribute towards making the ideas contained in them seem 'common sense' thus the more the occurrences in threes; the higher the impact is felt.

The Purposive Use of Pronouns

Language is an important tool for media men. And for them to achieve desired outcomes in their ideology they make frequent use of pronouns. It becomes very obvious that through calculation, the purposive use of certain pronouns, the audience's attitudes towards the speaker may be influenced or even reversed. Here, our preoccupation is the purposive use of pronouns such as the inclusive/exclusive 'we'-the use of the first person plural('we', 'us', 'our'). In this light, we talk of inclusive 'we' when the individuals spoken including the speaker belong to a referential area of the pronoun. Contrarily, the exclusive 'we' excludes the individual or group of individuals spoken to from its intended referential scope. This study equally examines the purposive use of the 'I' versus 'we'. And according to Thomas and Wareing[34], a politician may intentional include himself.

Expressions for Personal Opinions and Ideology

The notion of ideology is described by Thomas and Wareing as '...any set of beliefs which, to people who hold them, appear to be logical and natural.' Media men often rely on certain expressions to express their opinions and ideologies. Such expressions include: 'I think', 'I strongly believe' and 'I have the conviction'. These expressions are in this study considered as distinctive features used by the speaker to empower his discourse. The first-person singular pronoun attached to each of these expressions is indicative of the fact that such expressions reflect the speaker's point of view.

Lexical and Syntactic Repetition

Repetition is an act of writing something again or more than once. Repetition according to Reichheld in English is used to emphasis meaning. Also, according to Halliday and Hassan, [10;25], lexical and syntactic repetitions contributes to the creation of cohesive text, where by lexical items across sentences and paragraphs from a cohesive link which helps leaders to follow up meaning.

Conceptual Metaphor

Metaphoric language is as old as the existence of man. These metaphors are very prevalent in our day-to-day

communication whether consciously or unconsciously. Etymologically, metaphor comes from the greek word 'meta' and 'pherien' and it means 'to transfer' or 'to carry beyond' Vertessen and De Landtsheer[11]. There is however a lack of consensus on what exactly is being transported or on what effect this transportation has. This is reflected on the lack of agreements on the terms reflecting the metaphorical process, metaphor content and metaphor context. Different terminologies such as 'vehicle, focus on subsidiary subject, and ground' have been used by various researchers to dominate the metaphor content. On the one hand, metaphor context being the subject of what is defined is referred to as tenor, the frame, the principal subject and topic Vertessen and Landtsheer [30] . In this study however, the term 'source' is used to refer to metaphor content whereas the term 'target' is used to refer to the context Beer and de Landtsheer [11]. Defines metaphor as: a linguistic representation that results from the shift in the use of a word or phrase from the context or domain in which it is expected to occur to another context or domain where it is not expected to occur, thereby causing semantic tension. Potentially has linguistic, pragmatic, and cognitive characteristics. This is the definition used in this study as its scope is widened to encompass linguistics, pragmatic, and cognitive characteristics.

Conceptual metaphor theory commonly called cognitive linguistics attracted popular attention with the publications made by Lakoff and Johnson [11] in the metaphor we live by. Here they posit two domains as far as conceptual metaphor is concerned. The 'source' domain focuses on the concept while the 'target' domain is concerned with what you try to understand. And it is in the course of combining the source and the target domain that one gets to do 'mappings. Thus, it is this cross mapping which takes the form of conceptual mappings that is applied not just to a novel or poetic expression but to much of our ordinary everyday language. Lakoff posits the general theory of metaphor which characterizes cross domain mappings. Moreover, every abstract concept one does like time, states change, causation, and purpose also turn out to be metaphorical. The result is that metaphor is absolutely central to ordinary natural language semantics, and the study of literary metaphor is an extension of the study of everyday metaphor. So, the word metaphor has come to be used differently in contemporary metaphor research. As such, metaphor has come to mean cross-domain mapping in the conceptual setting. Conceptual metaphor now is how one perceives, thinks, acts, thinks and reasons in day-to-day life. Our conceptual system is just how one structures his language for everyone to understand as used in this study. Conceptual metaphor is seen in our ordinary daily way of thinking, speaking, and acting. So, there is no way in life that one can claim that he can get along perfectly well without metaphor because we have come to discover that it is a persuasive means used in our daily activities not only in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system: in terms of which we both think and act, it is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. So, if this is right, then the way we think, what we experience and what we do daily is obviously a matter of metaphor. What one needs to take note of is that our conceptual system is something that we are normally aware of because, in most of the little things we usually do; we simply think and act more or less automatically alone. Media theory is a set of ideas and principles used in the construction and deconstruction of media texts. A call for a critical analysis, interpretation and evaluation of various media messages, taking into account the following elements:

- The audience: how much of us makes sense of any media text on the basis of our gender, colour, race, culture, our individual and collective needs.
- Institutions: focus on concerns about social and political relations

- Ownership: who owns what, what do they have? Are media working for their owners or the audience?

According to this theory, the audience should learn not only through, but also about the media, messages. The audience should also be encouraged to search from different opinions and statements, aside from mainstream media, use concrete copy to demonstrate how dominant media are able to manufacture content; try to transfer the ideas or insights gathered into other areas of daily life. Media fixes our perceptions and organizes our experiences. Media tie the world together; they have penetrated the lives of all people in the planet, arranging people to interconnected human community. Media fixes our perceptions and organizes our experiences. Media constructs views of the real world for us to read and to interpret these views having been mediated, provided filtered and partial meanings. However, we mostly ignore this selection and fail often to question the language and images used like wallpapers. They are just there, suggesting ideologies that may be happening unknown to us.

5. Methodology of Data Collection and Analysis

Within the framework of this study, the primary sources are two publications of Cameroonian newspapers; Cameroon Tribune No 10602/6801 published June 4th, 2014; and the Guardian Post No 0608 published on May 29th. Meanwhile the secondary data constitutes works from related topics which are mentioned in the subsequent paragraphs.

Choice of Media Text

The newspapers were chosen because it covers both textual (articles, reports, interviews, etc) and non-textual (images and pictures) elements. It is also more accessible. These news papers were also selected because the newspaper vendors certified that they are among the most consumed/purchased by the audience.

The Corpus

The corpus used in this work consisted of images/ pictures, captions and two articles from the two newspapers under study namely, 'thankful Ex-Hostages say good bye to president Biya' published in Cameroon Tribune No 10602/6801 on June 4th 2014,pg2; and 'banknotes paid to Boko Haram detected by French satellites at the presidency' published in the Guardian post No 0608 on may 28, 2014, pg3.

Method of Data Analysis

The paper used both qualitative and quantitative research analysis of data. In this light, the various linguistic variables showing their persuasive effects mentioned above constituted the qualitative analysis. To compliment this, quantitative analysis is used to qualify and interpret these linguistic features analysed in this study.

The following linguistic and non- linguistic variables were taken into account in this study:

- Images and pictures

- The audience
- The publisher
- Three-part statement
- Contrastive pairs
- Purposive use of pronouns (inclusive/exclusive 'we', including 1st person plural extensions 'us' and 'our'; 'I' vs 'we')
- Expressing an ideology: 'I believe/I think'
- Conceptual metaphors

As far as metaphors are concerned, the methods of analysis used were: hermeneutic method of Wodak and Ludwig and Charteris-blacks method of analyzing metaphors [5;20]. Since Ludwig and wadak claim there is no 'RIGHT' interpretation, the hermeneutic approach comes to compliment as it dwells on the interdependency of the semantic, pragmatic, and cognitive dimensions of metaphors by Charteris-black. In this light, he defines metaphors as comprising of three main criteria: reification, personification and DE personification which create semantic tension. Reification consists of referring to something that is abstract using a word or phrase that in other contexts is concrete. Personification on the other hand, consist of referring something that is inanimate using a word or phrase that in other contexts refers to something that is inanimate. DE personification on its part consists of referring to something that is animate using a word or phrase that in other contexts refers to something inanimate. This study agrees with Wodak and Ludwig notion that readers and listeners interpretation of the same communicative event depend on their background or knowledge of information and position [2;5;9;14]. The next stage consists of interpreting the identified metaphors by finding the conceptual metaphors that underlie them. Conceptual metaphors are found by using the theoretical framework provided by cognitive linguistics. This stage also involves analyzing metaphors by target and source domain. Generally, this analysis includes tabulating the data for the purposes of comparison and trend findings. The last stage of the second method consists of explaining the findings. The discussions of the findings of the various linguistic features discussed taking into consideration the political, social, and economic and cultural contexts. The purpose here is to determine the relationship between the findings and the contexts in an attempt to uncover the ideological motivations behind the choices of these features. Presenting the following linguistic and non-linguistic features: images and pictures, the audience, the publisher, their-part statements, contrastive pairs, purposive use of pronouns (inclusive/ exclusive 'we', includinst person plural extensions 'us' and 'our'; 'I' vs 'we'), expressing an ideology: 'I believe/I think', conceptual metaphors as used in the two selected news papers. It also answers questions as to what are the different identifiable strategies used by media men to persuade their audience in order to achieve desired aims.

6. Presentation of Data

The Cameroon tribune shall be noted here below as CT and the guardian post will be noted as GP

Table1: Images and Pictures (In the Whole Newspaper).

Newspapers	Number of occurrences
CT	85
GP	30

Cameroon Tribune (CT) had 85 images and pictures in their newspaper while the Guardian Post (GP) had 30.

Table2: Publisher/Owner.

Newspapers	Publisher/owner
CT	Cameroon news and publishing corporation, state ownership
GP	Ngah Christian Mbipgo, private ownership

Audience

CT	A bilingual daily, destined to all Cameroonians and anyone interested
GP	Exclusively in English, so mainly addressed to the anglophones

Table 3: Purposive Use of Pronouns (In the Two Articles Selected).

	Inclusive pronouns(occurrences)	Exclusive pronouns(occurrences)
CT	I (0), we(0), me(0),us(0)	You (0), he/she/his/her (4), they/them/their/themselves (10)
GP	I (5), we (2), me(0), our(0),us(I)	You (3), he/she/his/her (13), they/them/their/themselves (3)

The ideologies expressed in these news papers can be traced from some of their captions as presented in the following table.

Table4: Expressing Ideologies (In the Two Newspapers).

	<i>Some captions or headings</i>
CT	<p>“Commonwealth, coopération franco-cameroun: deaux delegations chez la PAN” pg3</p> <p>“RDPC: une mission du comité central a kalé”</p> <p>« boko-harram, golf de guinee : préoccupations sécuritaires au minrex” pg4</p> <p>« Soutien au chef de l’état :la section RDPC mvila-centre »pg4</p> <p>« waste management: national forum in view »pg7 ;etc.</p>
GP	<p>“Nigerian consul general ends maiden tour” pg1</p> <p>“after strategic plan to decentralize UBa: tubah becomes ghost town, 500 houses unoccupied, over 2500 go jobless.” Pg1</p> <p>“kumbo: thieves loot private residence”pg1</p> <p>“time for SDF to reconcile with expelled militants” pg4</p> <p>“Hon. Awudu Mbaya strikes lousy donga Mantum CPDM elite!”pg6</p> <p>“I am unfortunately very ugly-John Okafor”pg8; etc.</p>

Conceptual Metaphor (In the Two Selected Articles)

CT	None
GP	The metaphor of “njangi” in “...the CPDM is contributing to a kind of “njangi” that when the day shall come for them to chop, they will not be able”

Table 5: Lexical and semantic repetitions, and collocations (in the two selected articles).

CT		GP	
Words/expressions	No of occurrences	Word/expressions	No of occurrences
Cameroon (ians)	5	Cameroon	3
State house	3	Boko-haram	5
President(ial)	5	SDF	10
Missionary (ies)	5	CPDM	2
		Nkambe and Ndu	7
		Fru Ndi	8
		I	5
		Money	2

- In Cameroon tribune, the dominant collocation is that of diplomacy
- In the guardian post, the dominant collocation is related to political party activities.

Three-part statements (in the two selected articles)

CT	GP
None	...I came here to sound a warning on malaria ...I came to sound a caution on HIV/AIDS... ...I am here again to echo a new warning... ...I have to come to warn because...

7. Discussion of Findings

As seen in the presentation above, both news papers make abundant use of images and pictures, this is a way to persuade their audiences and convince them on the validity and effectiveness of their information. The wallpaper of Cameroon tribune shows President Paul Biya and some hostages that had been released by some Islamic dissident boko harram group. On the contrary, the wallpaper of the guardian post shows Ni John Fru Ndi the chairman of the leading opposition party in Cameroon. These two images suggest blatant oppositions and ideological controversies as far as the two new papers are concerned. As concerns the wall papers, the languages used and the captions or heading of both newspapers translate into a greater extend the audience to which each of the newspaper is destined. Paying attention to these parameters, we realized that Cameroon tribune is destined to all Cameroonians whereas the guardian post is mostly destined to the English- speaking Cameroonians. Cameroon tribune is a state-owned newspaper published by Cameroon news and publishing corporation. For this reason, its editorial line is mainly geared towards the promotion of activities of members of government and state officials. This justifies why most of its captions or headings deal with such activities. It is thus almost impossible to find in these news papers, a critical article on the government. The guardian post on its own is of private ownership. From some of its captions, a critical reader can establish that its editorial line is centered on the promotion of activities of private individuals and those of the opposition parties (mainly SDF). It would thus be common to find in this newspaper article that are very critical about the government. In the

selected articles from the guardian post, we have two different voices (the narrator and a speaker). The use of inclusive (in we, us) and exclusive (you, she/he/her/his/they/their/the/themselves) pronouns and possessive adjectives in his article shows the involvement of the speaker in the event. It's seen that the narrator uses the speaker as the main source of the information. This is a strategy used by the writer to give more credit to its article. The use of direct citations and quotations is thus one of the strategies used by the narrator (media man) to persuade the readers/audience of the effectiveness of the reliability of his information. On its own, the selected articles from Cameroon Tribune makes use of only exclusive pronouns and possessive adjectives (they, the, their, his/her). This is a clear sign that the narrator is not involved in the events. In addition; the use of repetitions and three-part statement are also used as strategies to persuade the audiences of the various newspapers.

8. General Conclusion

This paper was conducted in order to analyse the persuasive strategies in media texts. A comparative study of two news papers". sets out to examined some of the strategies used by media men in general and newspaper publishers in particular to persuade their audiences and canalize their thoughts towards the editorial line of the media house. To achieve this, some tenets of the following theories were applied: media theory, discourse analysis and conceptual metaphor. After the analysis of data, it was established that images and pictures, captions or headings, three-parts statement, purposive use of pronouns, expression of ideologies and conceptual metaphors are some of the strategies used by media men to sway the audience towards a desired direction as it was demonstrated through the study of the two Cameroonian newspapers.

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