ECOLINGUISTIC RESONANCES: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS

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ABSTRACT

As is to be expected under the current dominant capitalist mode of production, climate change issues, whether in academia or society at large, first arose in the Metropolis during the latter decades of the 20th Century. This was inevitable given the unprecedented exploitation of the Earth’s resources that resulted from far-reaching technological advancements that radically boosted the Northern Hemisphere’s capacities for industrial and agricultural production. The price for this expansion has of course been Global Warming, not to talk of the entrenchment of social and economic inequality worldwide. The Southern Hemisphere, it appears, is just learning to catch up in the climate change debate and it is little wonder that Nigerian scholarship in this field is only just emerging. Using insights from Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistics, this paper attempts an ecolinguistic analysis from an eco-critical perspective of selected Nigerian newspaper editorials. As a print media genre, editorials reflect management opinion on public issues and are capable, as several media literacy studies have shown, of influencing both government policy and public opinion, making them a veritable site for discursive analysis whether from a linguistic or social theory angle. In addition, the paper presents a bird’s-eye view of work in ecolinguistics, highlighting the two dominant traditions attributed to Einar Haugen (1970) and Michael Halliday (1990).
When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an ax against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege – Deuteronomy 20:19.

Introduction

The issue of environment and its cultivation and preservation is as old as man itself. After God created Adam and Eve, he put them in the Garden of Eden with only one assignment – to tend the garden. Environmental concerns have been expressed from different disciplines and from different regions of the world. Scholars have interrogated the subject of environment from diverse perspectives. The scientists and social scientists have also been interested in the subject. The subject has also caught the attention of linguists and language scholars and this has led to a sub-discipline of language study known as ecolinguistics, an interrelationship between language and the environment. A vast body of both academic research and activist, political as well as journalistic work in ecolinguistics has been produced in the past three decades (Alexander and Stibbe 2013: 105). Like these authors, we will not attempt to catalogue such works here but will be content merely to present a bird’s-eye view of scholarly exertions in this disparate research tradition, where there is a strong assumption that a dialectic exists between language and the general natural environment (ecosystem), and that this has strong implications for the actions we take, as human organisms, in both our exploitation of the Earth’s inanimate resources and the humane awareness that we show of the other life forms with which we share this planet. The point of most work in ecolinguistics is the sustainability of the ecosystem, including human life, especially that of posterity. Simply put, ecolinguistics is ecology meeting linguistics – or vice versa. Ecolinguistics is committed to helping humankind transcend the anthropocentrism that marks our relationship with the other species, since anthropocentrism allows us to view ourselves as the centre of the universe (p. 106) – to the direct detriment of the ‘weaker’ species but also ultimately to our own detriment.

What is Ecolinguistics?

Defining ecolinguistics is somewhat problematic, because “there is no generally accepted definition and any definition is bound to either be so vague that it is meaningless (e.g., the study of language in an ecological context) or to exclude approaches which someone, somewhere considers to be ecolinguistics” (Alexander and Stibbe, 2013:104). The field of ecolinguistics has, “for historical reasons,…produced a large literature in German and Danish (rather than languages like English)” (Cowley, 2013: 63), so it is perhaps understandable that we do not yet have a substantial body of works on the subject in the English-speaking world as would normally have been the case considering that its ‘formal’ introduction was around the 1970’s. To gain a sense of this relative paucity of English language theorizing on ecolinguistics, we only need to compare the situation to the plethora of English language writings on ‘discourse analysis’ which similarly emerged about the same time (see Introduction in Schiffrin, Tannen and Hamilton, 2001: 1-5).
However, just as it would be presumptuous to insist that all significant ‘discourse analysis’ began only in the 1970’s or thereabouts, it would also be going against conventional wisdom in the field of ecolinguistics to claim that proper ecolinguistics emerged only with Einar Haugen’s talk at an applied linguistics conference of 1970. Indeed, insofar as a work concerns itself with an aspect of the link between language and its environment, the literature on ecolinguistics may be viewed as surely not beginning with Haugen’s work but expanded to include writings by Humboldt (1767-1835), Ludwig Wittgenstein, Leo Weisgerber, Jost trier, Alfred Korzbskly (1879-1950), Franz Boas (1858-1942), Edward Sapir (1888-1939), Benjamin Whorf (1897-1941), J. R. Firth, Kenneth Pike, Sydney Lamb, Whinnom, Salikoko Mufwene, Tatiana Slama-Cazau and Eugenio Coseriu, to name only a few of such scholars who have argued in one way or another about language’s link with either the mind, society or the natural/cosmic environment.

There is a tendency to begin from either the ecology end of the spectrum or the linguistics end of it in commenting on the phenomenon of language and the environment, leading to varied scholarly traditions in the field. Generally, however, Einar Haugen’s talk “On the ecology of languages”, given at the 1970 conference of the Centre for Applied Linguistics and published in The Linguistic Reporter of 1971 as “The ecology of language”, is credited with being the formal origins of the ‘metaphorical’ variant of ecolinguistics. Haugen would later re-echo his ideas in the book The Ecology of Language (1972), where he noted that the only previous mention of ecology in relation to language was in the work of C.F. Voegelin, F.M. Voegelin and N. Schutz. While Haugen was said to have orally suggested the term ‘ecolinguistics’ to Adam Makkai in 1972 (Cuoto 2013), the psycholinguist Kurt Salzinger is regarded as the first researcher to use it in print in 1979. Salzinger explained that by coining ‘ecolinguistics’ he wanted “to include psycho-, neuro-, and sociolinguistics” and added that he wanted to “emphasize the importance of the environment in the study of language, beginning with the assumption that language always occurs in a context and can be understood only in a context” (Salzinger 1979).

However, definitional pliability in the field is likely to stretch ad infinitum such that we would be forced to regard as ecolinguistic any work that as much as claims it is concerned with the language-context nexus. If that is so, then most work in structuralist and functionalist paradigms would qualify as such: in privileging speaker competence, the structuralist/mentalist would claim to be doing cognitive ecolinguistics, while the functionalist would point to their emphasis on the socio-cultural context that merges form with function, i.e. sociological ecolinguistics (symbolic ecology and natural ecology in fact complete the list of four ecologies of language that Steffensen and Fill (2013) identify). Indeed, it is not the case that such work could not truly be described as ecolinguistic; certainly the field features diverse strands of conceptual and theoretical underpinnings, which may in fact be at once both something to celebrate and to deplore. Perhaps this multiplicity of positions is cause for concern not so much because of their number as the absence of theoretical unity in the field.

Hence, most of the authors in the Special Volume of Language Sciences 41 (2014) argue for an integrative approach to ecolinguistics, insisting that “not just an ecological turn in linguistics, but
also a linguistic turn in the environmental sciences” (Bang and Trampe, 2013: 90) is the way forward (in the same volume, see also Steffensen and Fill, 6-25; Cowley, 60-70; Alexander and Stibbe, 104-110; Couto, 122-128). However, philosopher of science Peter Finke differs strongly by robustly advocating an understanding of science that does not see “diversity” in (for instance) ecolinguistic methods and theories as indicative of an immature, unsure science but as something to be welcomed in any 21st Century science that aims to sustain life by blending the “logical point of view” with “the ecological point of view” (Finke, 2013: 75-6).

As a blend (Yule 1996: 66) ecolinguistics comprises ‘ecology’ and ‘linguistics’. In the editorial of the said issue of Language Sciences Fill and Steffensen observe that ecology was defined in the 19th Century by Ernst Haeckel (1866) as “the study of the interrelations between organisms and between organisms and their environment.” Linguistics, as we know, is defined as the scientific study of language. However, Alexander and Stibbe (2013: 104-5) are happy to omit ‘scientific’ from their own definition as a prelude to provisionally defining ecolinguistics as “the study of the impact of language on the life-sustaining relationships among humans, other organisms and the physical environment”, viewing ecolinguistics as “normatively orientated towards preserving relationships which sustain life.”

As we noted above, substantial work has been produced in the field of ecolinguistics but we shall offer only a very brief historical overview of some of the most significant writings. First, we should note that the term ecolinguistics has two distinct but not necessarily separable origins. There is the ‘metaphorical’ application of the term, deriving from Einar Haugen’s “Ecology of Language”, where the interactions among organisms on the one hand, and between organisms and their environment on the other, in a biological ecosystem are compared to what happens in situations of language contact. In a natural ecosystem, diverse organisms are engaged in complex interrelations where it seems to be the case that it is survival of the fittest even though some anarchists have tried to show that cooperation, rather than competition, is the norm even in the animal kingdom that is thought to be ruled by brawn rather than reason (Kropotkin, ----). Nevertheless, organisms tend to adapt to their environment in order to increase their chances of survival.

Deployment of the conceptual metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) LANGUAGE IS A SPECIES allowed Haugen and subsequent scholars interested in language contact issues to speak of language growth or death, for instance, as a result of the interactions between or among languages on the one hand, and between all languages and the environments – the lifeworld (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 9) – in which they are spoken, on the other hand. As will be obvious to most people, it is a sociolinguistic fact that where two languages meet, the language of the more powerful group – economically, politically, technologically – will sooner than later displace that of the less powerful. In today’s world, for instance, there is no doubt that English has gained overwhelming power over indigenous languages in the former African colonies of Britain (for instance, see Adedun and Shodipe 2011). This situation is now being worsened by the strong cultural influence that the United States of America is able to wield all over the world especially
through its film and music industry (see Adedun 2010 for an example of this influence manifested as pervasive code-switching in a Yoruba Nollywood film). This is the effect of what Bourdieu (…) has called “symbolic capital” – a form of power/dominance that one entity exerts over another through its perception by the latter as possessing something ‘socially/culturally desirable’ (e.g. the ability to speak good English in colonial times must have conferred its Nigerian speakers with such power in relation to those who could not speak what was then an imperial language).

Haugen’s language ecology metaphor begins from the ecology end of the spectrum and is therefore at play in Joshua Nash and Peter Mühläusler’s (2013) article “Linking language and the environment: the case of Norf’k and Norfolk Island”, where the authors report the findings from the analysis of data whose gathering started in 1997. They show that Piktern-Norf’k is a language that reflects a deep immersion in its natural environment, particularly as reflected in the lexis and word-formation processes. For instance, *Allen* refers to poor food (after a man who complained about his food), *Elwyn’s trousers* refers to a fish named after an inhabitant’s trousers, just as *Hattie’s gown* refers to a fish named after the striped gown of a missionary teacher named Hattie Andre.

It would be inappropriate to regard the language ecology metaphor as merely that; the point of the metaphor is in fact to call our attention to the uniqueness of every language known to humankind such that we may begin to let go ethnocentric notions about the assumed inferiority or superiority of any language. The reasoning behind this is simple: if we agree that those who inhabit a particular ecology have the deepest knowledge of their environment, it follows that such knowledge would reflect in their language. Consequently, we must realize that with the extinction of any language goes the rich store of ecological understanding that could offer us more life-sustaining perspectives. Since Haugen’s pioneering work, numerous perspectives have been offered on what is now called ecolinguistics, one of which is the view by Cuoto (2013) that it be seen as a platform for the study of all language phenomena, including the morphosyntactic, phonological and phonetic. For Cuoto ecolinguistics must transcend sociolinguistics and eco-critical discourse analysis by incorporating theoretical and methodological ideas from the social and psychological sciences (p. 127).

different methodological and theoretical orientations. Their ultimate goal, however, is deepening the ecological perspective in linguistic/language studies.

The other tradition in ecolinguistics is thought to have begun with M.A.K. Halliday in 1990, where he gave a seminal talk at the IX AILA conference in Saloniki, Greece. His presentation was entitled “New ways of meaning: The challenge to applied linguistics”. Halliday’s subsequent paper now appears in two important ecolinguistics publications – Martin Dutz’s (Ed., 1992) *Thirty Years of Linguistic Evolution: Studies in Honour of Rene Driven* and Alwin Fill and Peter Muhlhausler’s (Eds., 2001) *The Ecolinguistics Reader: Language, Ecology and Environment*. Among the numerous insightful things that Halliday says in this paper we will address only a few. One, he calls our attention to the place of government policy in language matters, noting that government has naturally been more comfortable legislating on aspects of language other than the grammar. To this he posed the question: Is it that it is unnecessary or impossible? Two, this article showed Halliday as holding a dialectical view of the language-environment nexus, the environment including not only the physical/natural/social milieu but also the mind. To Halliday, then, “language is at the same time a part of reality, a shaper of reality, and a metaphor for reality” (Fill and Muhlhausler 2001: 180). Voicing his disagreement with Soviet ideology on the place of language, Halliday asserts:

> Language is not a superstructure on a base; it is a product of the conscious and the material impacting each on the other – of the contradiction between our material being and our conscious being, as antithetic realms of experience. Hence language has the power to shape our consciousness; and it does so for each human child, by providing the theory that he or she uses to interpret and to manipulate their environment (ibid: 179-80).

Three, Halliday contends that tinkering with the grammar of language is in fact possible. Citing lexical changes imposed on English by activist work against racism and sexism in the English language (e.g. using a plural pronoun in order to avoid the ‘unmarked’ masculine form), he tries to show that the lexicogrammar may be reconfigured in such a way that we conceive of the semantic implications of a word like ‘growth’ in a radically different way. Why, he urges, do we not consider seeing ‘growth’ as in fact ‘shrinkage’? Looking at the idea this way helps us to be more conscious about what we do when exploiting the earth’s resources to positive ends. Consequently, any misuse of these resources would be regarded as ‘negative shrinkage’, so that *ab initio* we already have the notion that the earth’s resources are not infinite and can surely be exhausted by us! Related to this is our conception of resources like *oil*, *water* and *gas*, for instance, as non-count nouns as if they were inexhaustible. This is certainly the most *linguistic* aspect of Halliday’s ecology of language, where he draws on concepts from his Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL).

Four, and deriving from his dialectical view of language and society, Halliday asserts that the dominant mode of production in society inevitably yields an effect on the lexicogrammar such that “as material conditions change the forms given by language to consciousness also change”
Here he talks about ‘semogenesis’, the process of construing meaning, and ‘semohistory’, which may be defined as the collective processes by which society’s ways of meaning making through language and other semiotic systems are affected by radical changes in the relations of material production. Five, the article finds Halliday identifying explicitly with an ideological position in his linguistic scholarship, since he allows that language is more socially constructive than reflective. Consequently, such a linguist would throw their weight behind ecolinguistics who wants to see the earth’s resources exploited less dangerously.

So far, then, we have observed that Einar Haugen and Michael Halliday are thought to have pioneered two traditions in language ecology: the metaphorical view and the linguistic. However, Steffensen (2007) has argued that this may be too simple a claim to make.

We now turn to another ‘committed’ research tradition in language studies and social research: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis is any discourse analysis with a ‘critical’ element as its most defining feature. It is an offshoot of SFL-informed linguistic analysis of institutional/organizational discourse that began in the late 1970s at the University of East Anglia, called ‘Critical Linguistics’ (Fowler et al. 1979; Kress and Hodge 1979). What is ‘critical’ within the contexts of Critical Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis? Fowler (1991) defined critical linguistics “as an enquiry into the relations between signs, meanings and the social and historical conditions which govern the semiotic structure of discourse, using a particular kind of linguistic analysis.” It is clear from this definition that the linguistic element is a crucial part of such work if it must differentiate itself from a diverse range of discourse-analytic methods that derive from philosophical, economic, cultural, political and literary contexts, among others. For fowler, then, signs and meanings are not enough as the objects of semantic enquiry, for the social and historic conditions that inform the structure of spoken and written language inevitably wield a powerful influence on people’s language activities in all spheres of life.

In other words, our use of language ties up inescapably and complexly with the social position we occupy in relation to others. This is ultimately what informs both our understanding of language and our own reproduction of meaning. Language, as the most elaborate semiotic system that humankind can claim rather deep knowledge of, is subjected both to structural and social rules. However, it is the case that the complex workings of these rules are not so obvious to most users. Consequently, those who wield power in society are able to press language to the service of their own particular ideologies, which are then passed off common sense and naturalized over time until the rest of society accepts them as unproblematic.

Yet resistance to discursively achieved domination also sometimes happens, and the proliferation of such resistance is what critical linguists or critical discourse analysts are interested in. Because such linguists realize that domination is not merely a matter of language, they are also interested
in studying these social and historical conditions that Fowler talked about. And because there is a plethora of perspectives and analytic methodologies to achieving this aim, several traditions have arisen within critical discourse analysis and critical linguistics. Very briefly, therefore, we shall examine only three of the major scholars in this field who have developed distinct approaches to such discourse analysis. These are Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak and Teun van Dijk. Common to all CDA researchers is recognition of the centrality of ideology and power relations in social life, for these are coded into the structure and praxis of discursive activities in the real world. This is why their works are theoretically informed by social and philosopher theorists like Antonio Gramsci, Jurgen Habermas, Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser.

*Norman Fairclough and Language as Social Practice*

Most critical discourse analysts tend to be open about their commitment to a particular ideological standpoint, especially one that takes sides with people believed to be ‘marginalized’, e.g. people suffering racial or gender discrimination. Such analysts consider that their research efforts should be geared towards helping to uncover *textual* and *social* practices that further oppression or exploitation; consequently, they have historically focused on the language activities of people wielding power in any society. Norman Fairclough is one such researcher. In Fairclough (2001: 4 [1989]) he sees himself as writing as “a socialist with a generally low opinion of the social relationships in [his] society and a commitment to the emancipation of the people who are oppressed by them.”

Fairclough’s discourse theory is informed by his view of language as social practice, which implies three dialectically related things:

1. That language is a part of it, and not somehow external to it.
2. That language is a social process.
3. That language is a socially conditioned process, conditioned that is by other (non-linguistic) parts of society. (ibid: pp.18-19)

There is not enough space, or even need, to explain these ideas here, but suffice it to note that for Fairclough CDA is a form of critical social science, which always has emancipatory goals (Fairclough 2000). In Fairclough (2003) he outlines his ‘manifesto for CDA’, insisting that his overall goal for there to exist a society in which inequality is radically reduced. Fairclough’s work in CDA started in the early 1980s. He has investigated an extensive range of issues in social science (political, economic, cultural, sociological, philosophical) in their discursive dimensions in relation to gradual processes of social change. Fairclough (1999) examined radical discursive changes in ‘Late Modernity’ (co-authored with Lilie Chouliaraki). Globalization, which has been presented as happening on its own, is the focus of Fairclough (2006). On its own part, Fairclough (2000) was an attempt to map the language with which Prime Minister Tony Blair was able to construct an identity for ‘New Labour’ in Britain. Earlier, Fairclough had analyzed the place of language widespread social change in Fairclough (1992) and his media
literacy work was Fairclough (1995). In the same 1995, his early papers were collected in a volume, detailing his work, among others, in the then emerging ‘marketization’ of British universities.

In more recent times, Fairclough has been advocating a thoroughly transdisciplinary way of doing social and linguistic research and embarking on collaborations with other theorists and researchers on the achievement of a more solidary world. Ultimately, Fairclough wishes for more critical language awareness in society, as a way of combating the perpetually devious use of language in the political sphere. It is no wonder, therefore, that eco-critical discourse analysis draws heavily on his ideas.

Ruth Wodak and the Discourse-Historical Method

To give a summary of Ruth Wodak’s understanding of CDA, the following bullet points will be helpful:

- CDA is concerned with social problems. It is not concerned with language or language use per se, but with the linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures. Accordingly CDA is essentially interdisciplinary.
- Power relations have to do with discourse (Foucault 1990, Bourdieu 1987) and CDA studies both power in discourse and power over discourse.
- Society and culture are dialectically related to discourse: society and culture are shaped by discourse, and at the same time constitute discourse. Every single instance of language use reproduces or transforms society and culture, including power relations.
- Language use may be ideological. To determine this it is necessary to analyse texts to investigate their interpretation, reception and social effects.
- Discourses are historical and can only be understood in relation to their context. At the metatheoretical level this corresponds to the approach of Wittgenstein (1984, §7), according to which the meaning of an utterance rests in its usage in a specific situation. Discourses are not only embedded in a particular culture, ideology or history, but are also connected intertextually to other discourses.
- The connection between text and society is not direct, but is manifest through some intermediary such as the socio-cognitive one advanced in the socio-psychological model of text comprehension (Wodak 1986).
- Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory. Critical analysis implies a systematic methodology and a relationship between the text and its social conditions, ideologies and power relations. Interpretations are always dynamic and open to new contexts and new information.
- Discourse is a form of social behavior. CDA is understood as a social scientific discipline which makes its interests explicit and prefers to apply its discoveries to practical questions. (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter 2000: 146).
Specifically, the Discourse-Historical Method considers the social-psychological, cognitive and linguistic dimensions of text production, each of these dimensions consisting of its own elements. Using this method, Wodak has studied issues of identity and racism in European society while also utilizing interdisciplinarity, triangulation and ethnography. Her work has mostly used historical data, mostly diachronic. To do this effectively, Wodak (1990: 57), cited in Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter (2000: 159-160):

- Setting and context should be recorded as accurately as possible, since discourses can only be described, understood and interpreted in their specific context.
- The content of an utterance must be confronted with historical events and facts as well as presented reports (intertextuality).
- Texts must be interpreted by other subject specialists (sociology, history, psychology). All stages imply an interdisciplinary approach as an important characteristic of the discourse-historical method.
- Texts must be described as precisely as possible at all linguistic levels.

Teun van Dijk and the Socio-cognitive Approach

Teun van Dijk’s work in (critical) discourse analysis has correctly emphasized the place of cognition or mental representations in the production, reception, interpretation and resistance of discourse and discursive practices. Not surprisingly, then, van Dijk has written extensively on the place of ideology and hegemony in society as manifested in our language actions. For van Dijk, cognition mediates the interaction between the micro-level of the text or talk and the macro-level of social relations in which different ways of exercising power are imbricated. Van Dijk (2001: ) observes:

Critical discourse analysis can only make a significant and specific contribution to critical social or political analyses if it is able to provide an account of the role of language, language use, discourse or communicative events in the (re)production of dominance and inequality. There are two major dimensions along which discourse is involved in dominance, namely through the enactment of dominance in text and talk in specific contexts, and more indirectly through the influence of discourse on the minds of others.

Political commitment is thus also clear in van Dijk’s CDA. The concept of mind control is a matter of ideology, which is itself more of a group rather than an individual phenomenon. Therefore, CDA studies the production and reproduction of ideologies in their manifestation as text in context, notably in the negative construction of Others and positive construction of Us.

Regarding individual and collective ecological practices, it should be clear by now how those who wield power through the media are able to influence responses to problems of the environment. Media owners and managers have power over discourse in being able to set the
agenda; consequently, when specific positions are promoted ahead of others, they inevitably become dominant and are accepted as common sense. Investigating newspaper genres for their focus on ecological issues gives us an understanding of how and what the media are contributing to the debate. In this case we concern ourselves with the editorial.

**Scholarship on the Editorial as an Influential Newspaper Genre**

As with other arms of the mass media, the press has been a crucial cultural aspect of the modern political economy. The term ‘press’ refers to journalists in general, but most people tend to have only print journalists in mind when they use the word. The traditional press includes newspapers, magazines and tabloids, etc. Within the newspaper are multiple genres such as news stories, columns, features, adverts, obituaries, photo news, opinion articles and editorials. A genre is the “staged, structured way in which people go about achieving goals using language” (Eggins 1994). Consequently, the manner in which a news story is presented would differ from how a human angle is structured; this has implications for both the language and the format. However, one constant in the press is the headline, which occurs in every genre; in fact, the headline can sometimes be described as a genre, especially when it is by itself the subject of ideological and linguistic investigation.

For the moment, however, our concern is with the editorial as a newspaper or magazine genre. The editorial is a kind of opinion article, but in this case the opinion of the newspaper/magazine management/proprietor on a topical international/national/local issue. The editorial has a few unique characteristics. One, it occupies a fixed page in the publication and is rarely moved. Two, it is a compulsory item especially in the weekday editions of daily publications. Three, it details the collective position of a newspaper’s management team, more often than not including the approved view of the owners. Four, it uses a font style that is different from that used in other sections of the publication; the font is highlighted with **boldening** or enhanced size. Five, it uses a formal language that does not admit of first-person pronouns compared to other types of opinion writing.

Van Dijk (1995) notes a general schematic structure in editorials. This comprises a summary of the event, evaluation of the event and a pragmatic conclusion. In the summary section, the editorial “will have to briefly tell what happened and to remind the readers what the event was.” In the evaluation section, the editorial clearly spells out what was good or bad, wrong or right of the event, and especially about the people involved as actors. The recommendation part of an editorial invites readers to answer to the question ‘what next?’ what are we going to do about this?’

Hall (2003) identifies a number of newspaper editorial categories, i.e. editorials of criticism, attack, defence, endorsement, praise, appeal and entertainment. Assigning an editorial to any of these categories is of course dependent on the communicative purpose of the particular editorial. Kittiladdaporn (2013) classifies editorials into five: those on important world figures or
movements; those on political issues such as government policy and decisions; those on the environment and social issues; those on the arts; those dealing with economic and business matters or news such as inflation, deflation, depression and the stock exchange. We consider that Hall’s classification is according to tone while Kittiladdaporn is according to subject matter.

In terms of function, Van Dijk (1993) points out that editorials have several interactional, cognitive, socio-cultural and political functions. First, in the framework of communicative interaction, they primarily have argumentative and persuasive functions. Newspaper editorials thus intend to influence the social cognition of the readers. Editors also try to reproduce their own attitudes and ideology among the public at large. Thirdly, editorials tend to directly or indirectly address influential news actors by evaluating the actions of such actors or by recommending alternative courses of action. Editorials also function politically as an implementation of power in an attempt to legitimize the dominance of a specific elite formation such as government in power. Finally, by their normative and ideological nature, editorials also have an important cultural function, that is, the persuasive formulation and reproduction of acceptable norms and values by which news events may be evaluated.

Considerable scholarship exists on editorials as data for studies in media discourse, political discourse as well as general discourse analysis. With reference to environmental issues in a Nigerian context, Okoro, Odoemelam and Martin (2013) have examined how ‘source attribution’, ‘attribution of blame’, ‘advocacy’ and ‘articulation of solution’ were framed in Nigerian newspaper editorials after the unprecedented floods of 2012. Adopting a quantitative-qualitative methodology, the researchers derived a census of 23 relevant editorials out of a population of 728 editorials from *The Daily Sun, The Vanguard, ThisDay* and *The Guardian* newspapers between July and December 2012. Their analyses offer interesting conclusions on the discursive strategies that newspaper managements can adopt to ensure their editorials contribute meaningfully and successfully both to furthering awareness of ecological challenges and to the proffering of solutions that can potentially influence government policies. Similarly, in a more extensive study, Batta, Ashong and Bashir (2013) polled *ThisDay, Daily Trust, The Guardian* and *The Punch* from January 2007 to December 2009 in order to discover what ecological issues received focus and how so. Not limiting their work to editorials, the authors did a content analysis of systematically sampled 438 issues out of 4380 editions of the purposively selected dailies. As part of their analytical verdict, they advocated making ecological discourse more accessible to the ordinary people, emphasizing adaptation instead of mitigation strategies (since the people are powerless to stop climate change but can only alter their own actions), sourcing ecological perspectives more from local experts than foreign ones, and editorializing or featurizing climate change discourse more rather than confining it to shorter genres such as news stories. These two works are indeed valuable contributions to Nigeria’s ecological crises from a scholarly perspective. A minor critique of them would only be that as instances of academic research in a country where there is little Town-Gown cooperation, their recommendations may fail to make it into government policy or even media practice, for that matter.
In other climes work on editorials has taken several dimensions. Bonyadi (2010) explores the rhetorical properties of the schematic structures of newspaper editorials in a comparative study of English and Persian editorials. Drawing on the theory of inter-cultural rhetoric analysis and considering the important role of newspaper editorials in shaping public opinion, Bonyadi’s study examines the schematic structures of *The New York Times*’ and *Tehran Times*’ editorials of criticism. The comparative study was to explore the discourse conventions employed in the editorials of the two newspapers. Adopting a non-random purposive sampling that focused only on the editorial of criticism, forty (40) editorials were sampled in all: twenty (20) from each publication.

The analysis, discussions and findings reveal some key characteristics of the schematic structure of the editorials of criticism in the two newspapers. The research established that both editorial types had ‘introduction’ as the first schematic structure in which the editorial writers set the scene and take a stance on a controversial issue. According to Bonyadi, the introduction section was composed of two distinctive sub-sections or moves that he labels ‘orientation’ and ‘criticism’. The analysis revealed that each move (orientation and criticism) had a certain communicative intention contributing to the overall intention of the editorial. The second schematic structure, which is the ‘body’, was realized through presenting, developing and evaluating sub-topics forming a typical sequence. The third and final schematic structure, which is ‘ending’ or ‘concluding the topic’, was realized through different rhetorical strategies. Bonyadi however concluded that the editorials in both newspapers differed in the way the strategy was used.

Katajamaki and Koskela (2006) explored the rhetorical structure of newspaper editorials published in English, Swedish and Finnish. Their research sought to find out whether there was a typical rhetorical structure for the editorials in business newspapers irrespective of national and cultural features. It also sought to establish whether the typical rhetorical structure of the editorials comes in different types and to identify what they are. Thirdly, what factors connected with the content of the text, language and culture seem to correlate with the different types? Using purposive sampling based on the argumentative analysis method, the researchers selected twenty-two (22) editorials “that are not explicitly political and concern macro economics.” Their analysis established that the typical rhetorical structure for the editorials includes an introduction section that describes an event or a critical state of affairs, followed by an intermediate section where the text moves to the consequences of the event and analyses. This section, they found, can be divided into two stages: the intermediate stage which includes reasons, evidence or examples; and the solution stage. The final section of the editorial involves the ‘coda’, which consists of a text-closing conclusion. Sometimes this closing contains a moral lesson. Responding to their research question whether there are variations between the editorials and whether specific types of rhetorical structure could be identified, Katajamaki and Koskela found that variations indeed existed in the rhetorical structure of the three newspapers and that the variation concerned two stages of rhetorical structure, namely the solution and the moral.
Another finding of their research was that editorials in business newspapers seldom present any direct solutions to the critical issues discussed while a low number of solutions were presented in the intermediate section of the editorials. This was because the data were limited to editorials dealing mainly with economic questions; they left out political texts. Finally, the research established that there might be a connection between the solution and the moral, which tend to appear in the same editorials. Ultimately, Katajamaki and Koskela (2006) argue strongly that the editorial is a rather unified genre irrespective of the type of journalism where it occurs.

Hawes (2010) explores thematic progression and rhetoric in the editorials of two of Britain’s most popular newspapers, *The Sun* and *The Times*. His work not only examines the development of thematic progression in those papers from 1991-2008 but also offers tentative conclusions on the rhetorical strategies behind the changing progression choices. Hawes argues that key to the rhetorical strategy of any text including that of newspaper articles is the way information and comments are organized through thematization, that is, the structuring of a clause into two parts: theme (the first part of a clause) and rheme (the remainder). For him what moves a text forward as a whole is thematic, by which a theme and/or rheme of a clause link up with those of other clauses. Thematic progression, according to him, is thus the joint development of theme and rheme to create a coherent text and to persuade.

Drawing on Danes’ (1974) and Hoey’s (1991) progression types as well as Halliday’s (1985) model, Hawes’ research is based on the analysis of the same ten days’ editorial columns from *The Sun* and *The Times* of October 1991 followed by another ten days’ editorials from September 2008. The data comprised 121 articles in all. Hawe’s methodology involved locating and numbering each independent clause in the editorials, identifying a theme/rheme for each clause-complex, identifying a Danes’ progression type for each, analyzing the similarities and differences between progression in both papers and, finally, comparing the pragmatic uses made of these in 1991 as against 2008 while formulating hypotheses as to their changing rhetorical motivation. Findings from Hawes’ research show that in 1991 both newspapers used the three Danes’ progression types similarly for typical editorials. However, changes from 1991-2008 suggest that both papers, particularly *The Times*, have been moving down market and simplifying the underlying information structure of their texts. *The Times*, for example, is moving towards ‘tabloidization’ whilst *The Sun* is also gradually shifting towards ‘broadsheetization’ of its contents. Hawes (2010) however concludes that the major finding of his research is that both *The Times* and *The Sun* are converging, each moving away from the polarized styles of 1991 when *The Sun* posed as disarmingly frank and *The Times* as impartial in their editorial contents.

Using a corpus of thirty (30) editorials from *The Washington Times*, Ansary and Babaii (2004) applied Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to investigate their macro-rhetorical structure. Based on this, the research identified four obligatory structural elements: Run-on Headline (RH), Addressing an Issue (AI), Argumentation (A), and Articulating a Position (AP). The authors noted that there also emerged the optional element of providing background information (BI),
which either preceded addressing an issue (AI) or followed it. There is also initiation of argumentation (IA), which in some cases was necessary to help writers begin their arguments. A third optional element is the closure of arguments (CA), which was sometimes used to nicely round off the arguments. In sum, Ansary and Babaii argue strongly that the generic structure potential (GSP) presented in the research is a condensed statement suggesting that an unmarked English newspaper editorial typically carries a headline and addresses an issue that may or may not require some background information occurring either before or after it. It then starts an argumentation for or against the addressee issued by an initiation statement that is optional. It makes the arguments and finally takes a position on the issue discussed.

Wekesa (2012) also assesses argumentative normativity in the English-medium Kenyan newspaper editorials from a linguistic-pragmatic perspective. According to him, acts of arguing have certain pragmatic constraints that have to do with their communicative nature. Wekesa’s work covers contemporary argumentation theory and is specifically based on Bermejo-Luque’s (2011) Linguistic-Pragmatic Approach. One objective of the study was to establish whether the editorials in the English-medium newspapers in Kenya adhere to the classical structure of argumentation discourse. Another objective was to find out what clause relations as linguistic features are employed and how they signal the rhetorical structure of these editorials. Finally, there was the objective of identifying how the clause relations facilitate interaction between the editorial reader and the editorial text. For method, Wekesa (2012) adopted Mann and Thompson’s (1987) rhetorical structure theory (RST). The results and findings show that English-medium editorials of Kenyan newspapers indeed adhere to the classical structure of argumentation, that is, they have a proposition, support/evidence and a conclusion. It was also found that different clause relations signal each of these structural components, that is, the proposition, the evaluation and the conclusion. Again, interpersonal relations, whose purpose is to increase the reader’s acceptance and belief, are highly favoured in English-medium newspaper editorials. Finally, it was found that sparingly used are the ideational-textual relations whose main purpose is to signal the ideas under discussion and to show the text progression.

Le (2010), citing Condit (1996), shows how the latter compared the argumentation styles in sixty (60) American, sixty (60) British and one hundred and eighty (180) Finnish editorials. It was found that Anglo-American writers always explicitly state the main point of their argument in a thesis summary, while Finnish writers do not include thesis summaries when they deal with sensitive issues in order to mitigate potential disagreements.

Tongsibong (2012) studied genre analysis of English editorials regarding hard news in broadsheet and tabloid newspapers with emphasis on move analysis. The study investigated structural organization of those editorials through an examination of common move structures, the similar and different attributes in the move structures of the genre and communicating intentions of the genre. Using a data of thirty (30) English editorial texts of broadsheet newspapers and thirty (30) texts of tabloid newspapers, analysis of the moves revealed that there is one common move structure in the broadsheet newspaper editorials which consist of four
moves. In editorials of tabloid newspapers, two common move structures were established. The study also revealed that the communicating intentions of the English editorial genre was mainly to motivate and persuade readers to consider ideas or to give opinions that oppose or support the information provided in those editorials as well as to express strong opinions in order to stimulate some reaction from readers. Finally, in a Chinese context, Lihua (2009) studied the formalization of power in editorials in China Daily. The work demonstrated how the institutional power of China Daily, perhaps the country’s only national newspaper, is reproduced through the structure of its editorials.

As we can see, therefore, the editorial is a very important barometer by which discursive practices at the micro level can be studied in relation to their macro effects at the level of social practice.

_CDA and Ecolinguistics: Eco-critical Discourse Analysis_

Alexander and Stibbe observe correctly that “[w]hat is deeply embedded in or even hidden by certain linguistic choices is what a critical analysis of ecological texts sets out to unearth” (105). For example, one could argue that stamping “promotional” text on a pack of fruit juice that says “0% added sugar” might be an attempt to lead buyers away from the admittedly undenied but unasserted reality that the product _ab initio_ contains sugar, now considered as one of those hardly life-sustaining substances. Such text is not just offering value-free information, but also in fact promoting the particular interests of the manufacturer (Fairclough, 2003: 34) in a consumerist world—some would argue to the detriment of healthy living. This is the sort of thing that may be described as the promotion of ‘corporate bodily harm’, following Stuart Saint’s ‘corporate environmental harm’ (2008), where he notes that switching the terminology from _global warming_ to the agentless nominalization _climate change_ could have been an attempt by corporate power brokers with immense control over media discourse to present environmental problems as inevitable and natural. Surely the nominalization _global warming_ contains the inflected material process verb (Halliday, 1994) ‘warm’ that is always capable of provoking the query ‘who is responsible for warming the earth?’ On the other hand, and again in terms of Halliday’s (2007) systemic ecolinguistics, the lexico-grammatical choice of _climate change_ is most likely designed to play a big role in an “ideological-discursive formation” (Fairclough 1995) that wants to shift responsibility for environmental harm away from the biggest culprits; this is done by primarily presenting environmental problems as happening on their own. According to Stuart Saint (2008),

This manipulation of language is also evident in the names of corporate-funded groups such as the Global Climate Coalition, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, and the Information Council on the Environment, which despite their proenvironment sounding names, support unlimited unregulated resource extraction. (Rowell, 1996: 27) and are engaged in an active campaign of dissuasion (Monbiot, 2007b: 22) regarding environmental harm.