

Lexical Choices in Conflict Reporting in the Cameroon Print Media: *The Post* and *Cameroon Tribune* Reporting of the Anglophone Crisis

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ABSTRACT

This research reviews private and public newspaper articles on the Cameroon Anglophone crisis. The aim was to find out the lexical choices that reporters adopt in reporting the crisis, and how these words and expressions portray the ideologies of the reporters, as well as their impacts on the course of the conflict. Data for this study comprises 54 newspaper editions. Thirty purposefully selected editions of Cameroon Tribune and twenty-four purposeful selected editions of The Post newspaper in Cameroon. The data come from the news, commentaries, and human-interest stories of the selected newspapers. The units of analysis are verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, and nominalizations. Critical Discourse Analysis was used to detect the different language styles used in reporting conflict, and the conceptual frames were language and conflict, conflict reporting, and lexical choices. Results show that words explicitly and implicitly carry different shades of meaning, and the way the writer presents them would escalate or deescalate conflict. The use of exclusive and inclusive pronouns (we, us, our versus they, them, and their) revealed that social actors are excluded from what they considered to be theirs, and this was liable to stir them to revolt, thus escalating the conflict. The results also revealed that writers use nouns, especially from the processes of nominalization, to distort and manipulate the truth in pursuit of specific interests. It is therefore recommended that reporters, when reporting sociopolitical crisis, should make less emotive lexical choices. They should also strive to be objective in reporting and have an ideology to promote peace rather than to instill upheaval.

Keywords: language, conflict, Anglophone crisis, lexical choice.

INTRODUCTION

The image of language from Sapir's perspective indicates that language is much more than a means of communication (Sapir 1963). As an instrument of communication, language can be used to, influence personality, declare war, provoke, incite, oppose ideas, intentions, and actions; condemn,

blackmail, insult, destroy, testify falsely, and to generate conflict. This implies, therefore, that language can be used to construct a thought, paint a picture in peoples' minds, control conflicting situations, demean differences among social groups, inflict violence among many, and can create/terminate actions.

Conflict is inevitable in the human world. It arises from or is associated with language in communication. Mojaye (2014) asserts that language does not always precipitate conflicts, but its use or misuse does. To him, language is the golden egg-layer in the management of conflicts because conflicts usually occur when the language used during communication is not good enough. For this reason, it is becoming increasingly clear that preventing conflict and its impact on the belligerents could be focused on the use of language. This research seeks to examine the way language is used in newspapers in reporting this crisis that has been rocking the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon since 2016.

Over the years, African nations have had to struggle with unprecedented conflicts, Cameroon inclusive. The consequences of these conflicts have been the destruction of human and natural resources, whose impacts include alarming retardation of economic and social development. Ikenga (2006: 218) affirms that

Conflict has been a scourge of humanity from the earliest times. The contemporary world has witnessed many intra and interstate conflicts, which have resulted in, among other things, the loss of lives and property, internal displacement of people, the flow of millions of refugees, and general destabilization of human beings.

Cameroon before now has not experienced any war like the socio-political armed upheavals and confrontations in towns and villages in the two Anglophone regions. The Cameroon mass media, especially the print media, is expected as duty, to appropriately report on the conflicts in a manner that would result in conflict containment and management rather than escalation. How language is used in reporting the



prevailing Anglophone armed conflict in Cameroon is the main focus of this research.

Historical Background of the Anglophone Crisis

From 1884 to 1916, Cameroon was a German protectorate that was later on partitioned between France and Britain following the defeat of Germany in the First World War by British and French forces in 1918. Francophone (French) Cameroon, which was afterward known as the Republic of Cameroon, became independent in January 1960 after a gruesome anti-colonial struggle. The people of Anglophone (British) Cameroon, (formerly Southern Cameroons), which was at that time a UN Trusteeship territory, had to decide their independence through UN-Organized Plebiscites, which were separate for the Northern and Southern Cameroons. Fanzo (1996) explains that the peoples of the Northern Cameroon voted to achieve independence as part of Nigeria and that the inhabitants of the Southern Cameroons voted to attain independence by reunification with Francophone Cameroon. Nyamnjoh and Konings, (2003) posit that after a constitutional conference in July 1961 in Foumban, the British and the French Cameroons reunited on 1 October 1961 to form a federated state of the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Then Anglophone Cameroon became West Cameroon and Francophone Cameroon East Cameroon. This constitutional arrangement viewed both Anglophone and Francophone communities as separate autonomous entities, each with its own cultural heritage but joined together to form a single state. In 1972, the Ahidjo government breached the Foumban Accord by abolishing the Federal Government and establishing a unitary state. This marked the beginning of the Anglophone grievances, which were documented as the “Anglophone Problem”. Samba Ngwana (2001), terms this as the outset of Anglophone resentment against the Francophones, and deems the problem between the two groups of peoples to be a constitutional one.

It is worth noting that the Anglophone problem escalated into the Anglophone crisis in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon towards the end of 2016. Nkongho (2017) points that the current outburst of the Anglophone crisis started with all Anglophone lawyers’ strike in October 2016, joined by all Anglophone teachers’ sit-in-strike in November 2016 and the Bamenda violent protest in December 2016. Nkongho holds that matters got complicated when the government declared a ban on the activities of Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) and the Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) on the 17 of January 2017. Then things went off hand when the Cameroon government arrested the president of the civil society consortium and his secretary, Barrister Nkongho Felix and Dr. Fontem Neba. Other subsequent arrests like that of Ayah Paul Abine and Mancho Bibixy, coupled with internet shutdown and the street clash between the Anglophone population and military men on the 1st of October 2017 with dozens of death recorded and hundreds arrested intensified the Anglophone crisis.

Mindful of the war exactions of the armed factions of the Anglophones popularly referred to as Ambazonian secessionist groups and the security forces of the government, the losses incurred by the government of Cameroon as a whole, there is a need for the conflict to be resolved. The media has been reporting this ‘war’ and the resultant cases of killings, kidnappings, confrontations, and other damages caused by the ‘war’. This work seeks to examine the language used by the print media in reporting these issues in newspapers. It seeks to verify the extent to which the language used in reporting may tend to incite or mitigate the conflict. Put otherwise, this paper attempts a linguistic analysis of the language used in some selected newspapers: *Cameroon Tribune* and *The Post*, in presenting the conflict in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon from late 2016 to 2018. More specifically, the study seeks to identify the lexical choices in conflict reporting in newspapers and how these words and expressions are liable to inflame or mitigate the conflict.

Empirical works on language in conflict abound in the literature. For example, Tita et al. (2016) examined the styles of conflict reporting of Cameroon newspaper coverage of cross-border conflicts. The conflicts in the Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria, and Gabon were seen to have raised security concerns for West and Central Africa and have consequently caused a humanitarian crisis, human rights, and health concerns for the regions. *The Post* newspaper and *Cameroon Tribune* from July 2014 to December 2014 were analyzed to have a broad view of how the Cameroon print media contributed to informing and educating citizens of Cameroon about the cross-border conflicts. Findings of the study reveal that the coverage of these conflicts by *Cameroon Tribune* and *The Post* newspaper focused on the Cameroon Government’s intervention in the cross-border conflict and on the perpetrators of the conflict.

The study equally indicated that more effort on reporting was on the military and the immediate action of the conflict than was on the widespread and more consuming humanitarian cost of conflicts. This implied that the larger social consequences of the conflict were ignored. The researchers observed that the number of deaths reported in the ranks of the Cameroonian military was far from the true numbers. They equally observed that the private press was unable to report on the exact numbers of military deaths, that is, when it came to reporting on Cameroonian casualties. This shortcoming raised suspicions in the minds of Cameroonians. The conflicts studied in this work are external to Cameroon even though Cameroon, a neighboring country to these countries, is heavily affected. This is different from the conflict studied in this work which is internal of Cameroon, and reporting is considered on all aspects of the conflicts. Tita et al. (2016) focused on the contents of the newspapers; meanwhile, this study centers on the linguistic features of reporting.

Language and Conflict

Conflict refers to a confrontation between individuals or a group resulting from opposite or incompatible ends or means (Schmid, 2002). Conflict is an antagonistic situation or adversarial process between at least two individual or collective actors over means or ends such as resources, power, status, values, goals, relations, or interests. To Schmid, the range of outcomes of conflict includes victory, defeat, domination, surrender, neutralization, conversion, injury, or destruction and elimination of the opposite party or, alternatively, the solution, settlement, or transformation of the conflict issue. Languages do not exist in isolation as abstract systems of sign but within the culture of the people. Jija (2012) is of the opinion that the best instrument for achieving peace and resolving conflict is the use of languages that honour and respect human dignity, tolerance, truth, and national integration. The kind of words that newspapers use in reporting the present conflicts in Cameroon shall be examined in this work. Hayakawa (1978), as cited in Jija (2012), maintained that people should avoid using words, utterances, or vocabulary items that are capable of creating tension, confrontation, and conflict between groups of people. He cited as an example, the use of words such as irresponsible, unguarded, arrogant, vandals, inferior as being words capable of creating tension and fueling conflict. It is, therefore, for this reason, that this research opts to examine the words used in reporting the conflict situations in Cameroon; in a bid to establishing the responsibility of language in the escalating crisis.

Conflict reporting

Conflict reporting is the process of giving a detailed account of conflict situations through messages, texts, or photographs. The language that is used in reporting conflict will not only impact on the way in which audiences will come to understand a conflict, but it will also impact on the way in which they will view the media. Lynch and McGoldrick (2005: 11) offer some advice when it comes to the choice of words in reporting conflict. They suggest that journalists should:

Avoid adjectives such as 'vicious', 'brutal', 'cruel', and 'barbaric'. These will always place the journalist in a position where he or she is seen to be siding with one party over another. Rather provide the facts that you have at your disposal and let the audience reach their own conclusions

Avoid labels like 'terrorist', 'extremist' or 'fanatic'. Using these terms places the journalist in a camp and shows bias. All of these terms suggest that the people being referred to are not rational actors and that their views are representative of a fringe minority. This is by no means always the case.

Avoid victimizing language like 'devastated', 'defenseless', and 'pathetic'. This can be disempowering. Don't just focus on what has been

done to people, but also show how people are coping.

Furthermore, journalists should also avoid adopting the terminology and jargon of the people they are reporting on. Using the jargon of a particular group can make journalists sound like they sympathize with that group, and this can impact the media organization's credibility. In all, conflict reporting means language should be used effectively by news producers during reporting.

Lexical Choices in News Reporting

Since different words carry different meanings, the use of particular words in a news text is significant. Piserak (1983) writes that there are always different ways to name people, events, and phenomena. He gives a classic example of the difference between *terrorists* and *freedom fighters*. But whether we call someone a 'freedom fighter,' a 'rebel' or 'terrorist', this is a lexical choice that is very much dependent on our opinion of such a person, and such an opinion, in turn, depends on our ideological position, and the attitudes we have about the group that person belongs to.

Adjectives are important in news texts. They describe people and events. Which words (adjectives) in news stories about the Anglophone crisis create which impression is one of the main concerns of this work. Adverbs, for their part, are often used to reinforce another expression; for example, "He barked sarcastically" (Merrill 1965: 73). Hansen (2010) remarks that it is important to examine the lexical choices in headlines about events in order to see what kind of discourses are invoked by vocabulary and metaphors, for example, an atmosphere of crisis or combat. By analyzing the choice of words, one can draw conclusions about the value judgments of the writer (Richardson 2007). The Investigation of lexical choices avails us of the ideas and attitudes readers associate with the prevailing conflicts in Cameroon. The lexical choices equally facilitate the critical analysis that this work makes on the news report.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts the qualitative research design with discourse analysis as the methodology. It undertakes a systematic analysis of language features in news discourses on the Anglophone crises in *Cameroon Tribune* and *The Post* newspapers. The research uses news on the Anglophone crisis between 2016 and 2018. To do this, *Cameroon Tribune* and *The Post* were purposively selected. Having purposively selected the newspapers for the study, we now had to come out with the articles in these newspapers that constituted the corpus of the study. These articles were purposively or conveniently selected, and only the articles that corresponded to or which had the linguistic features which suited the objectives of the study were chosen. The newspaper articles that were analyzed were drawn from 30 editions of *Cameroon Tribune* and 24 editions of *The Post* newspapers. This gave a total of 54 newspapers consulted.

The data of this study came from the news, commentaries, and human-interest stories of the selected newspapers. The units of analysis were verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, and nominalizations. Theoretical tools and concepts were put into practice to detect the use of the different language styles used in reporting conflict events. Critical discourse analysis was used for the analysis.

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this section of the research, lexical choices used by news producers in news articles of the crisis are also examined to establish if their usage contributes to escalate the conflict or not.

The use of Inclusion and Exclusion Pronouns: ‘We, Us, Our’ versus ‘They, Them, Their’

The use of ‘We, Us, Our’ and ‘They, Them, Their (other)’ in this domain signals national, cultural, ethnic, and group commonalities that are invoked regularly by group members to express a sense of patriotism and belonging during the crisis. The choices of pronouns used by groups or individuals are either inclusive or exclusive, and the absence of antecedents is an indication that there is background knowledge that has been left in the mind of the writer, which can only be interpreted with the analysis of the ideological square he or she used. Most often, in the ideological square, the actors are presented in a positive way, whereas; their oppositions are presented in a negative way. For example

- 1) *Madam LilianYuh, who sells cocoa yams at the Belo Main Market, said her small store was broken into by troops, and they made away with some of her cocoa yams; and other items which were not of any use to **them** were simply smashed in anger. (The Post, Friday, February 16, 2018 p3)*
- 2) *Actually, we are now at crossroads, and nobody can tell what will happen the next moment. It is so because the enemy is invisible. **We** must fish **them** out, they live with us, and **we** cannot continue to pretend”, the governor said. (The Post, Friday, May 04, 2018)*
- 3) *Mgr Michael Bibi, auxiliary Bishop of Bamenda Archdiocese told Cameroon Tribune after meeting the Prime Minister that, “the **other** church leaders also share **their** own opinions towards moving forward as a nation, of course, **we** condemned actions of violence perpetuated by the population or the military. Concerning Cameroonians in the Diaspora who have been championing the secessionist actions, he said, “**We** also appealed to the government to look even at the possibility of trying to reach out to members of the governing council because **they** are still Cameroonians though living abroad. **They** should be brought to the dialogue table, listen to **them** and get what **they** have to suggest and accept points that can be acceptable and drop what is unacceptable” (CT, Friday, 20 October 2017, p2)*

- 4) *During a concertation with the auxiliaries of the administration, Minister AtangaNji told them that he was poised to restore their authority....**We** are giving **them** two options: Either **they** leave the bushes and surrender, or **they** will be arrested by the forces of law and order and handed to justice (CT, Thursday, March 29, 2018, p3)*
- 5) *Most of **them** have been taken, hostage! Field realities show that some of **them** are following the crowd; simply because **they** want to belong or fear reprisal, others are being used as relay agents of the divisive doctrines, and many others are still on the fence. Preaching ghost towns and schools, destroying property, and subjecting fellow brothers and sisters to torture and intimidation by the same people decrying marginalization, most of them agree is simply self-marginalization that dampens the future(CT Wednesday, December 13 2017, p8).*

In example one, the lady claims positive and the troops negative as according to the ideological square. The lady is a victim, while the troops are the invaders who are perpetuating violence on her. In example two, “We” and “Us” are inclusive, but “Them” and “They” are exclusive. They are the enemy which is invisible, and which has to be fished out by us at all costs. The Bishop in excerpt 3 above, by referring to them as “we,” excludes the government, the population, and the Diaspora from their group. They condemn violence which, according to the “Us versus Them” principle, is perpetuated by those who do not belong to the “Us”, “We” group. According to the Bishop, the Diaspora is the main perpetrator of violence, which the Bishops are condemning. The Bishop also makes a suggestion to try to reach out to members of the governing council in the Diaspora. The suggestion of the Bishop equally appeals to the government to engage in dialogue in order to solve the Anglophone Crisis. In example four, Minister AtangaNji sounds threatening to them (Ambazonia fighters living in the bush); when he says, “We are giving them two options: Either they leave the bushes and surrender, or they will be arrested by the forces of law and order and handed to justice”. This is to say that Ambazonia fighters have been living in the bushes and holding to the opinion of never to surrender or leave the bushes until they obtain what they want. In example five, most of **them** have been taken hostage, and that some of **them** are following the crowd simply because **they** want to belong or fear reprisal, **others** are being used as relay agents of the divisive doctrines, and many **others** are still on the fence (CT Wednesday, December 13 2017, p8). The different opinions and reasons for choices are shown here. Trying to make known to “them” how they are being deceived is a strategy of news producers to influence the mind of the readers on what they should think about.

According to the principle of power and dominance, the idea of threat, as shown in excerpt 4 does not hold. Those in power are to persuade their subjects in order to dominate but

not to threaten them. These threats are potential instances to provoke upheaval in “them,” thus inflame the conflict. The news producers, in producing these instances may turn the tables. That instead of seeing and presenting the minister as threatening, he/she may present those living in the bushes and refusing to surrender as disobedient citizens and the minister being forced by their reactions to act.

Inclusive and exclusive pronouns (*We, Us, Our* versus *they, Them, Their*) in news reporting affect the audience and is liable to incite conflict (van Dijk, 1988). It is based on the sense of the insiders accusing the outsiders of negative actions. It is common in conflict reporting by the selected newspapers of this study and probably accounts for the escalation of the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon. Below is a discussion on how grammatical lexis impacts the course of the crisis.

Grammatical Lexis

Adverbs are often used to reinforce another expression. It is conspicuous that there has been considerable manipulation of lexical choices in reporting the Anglophone crisis that may inflame the crisis rather than lessen it. ... “On what might have been viewed as something intended to attenuate the Anglophone crisis, Fame Ndongo said following messages of appeasement and measures taken by the government under the directives of President Biya, the people in the two Anglophone Regions finally realized that they were manipulated and misled by Demagogues” (*The Post*, Friday, November 10, 2017). The adverb “finally” reflects a positive emotion about the end of the crisis. The use of this adverb also reflects a calmed situation in the voice of the speaker. Although the impression given by the lexical choice “finally” signals calm and de-escalation in the conflict, reporting in *The Post*, shows that there are still challenges. *AtangaNji further said, “...Generally, the situation in the Region is calm, but we have some security challenges”* (*The Post*, Friday, March 30, 2018 p3). The use of the adverb generally, needs attention because the writer used this adverb to bury ideas in the text. It indicates the challenges involved in bringing down the crisis. The article “some”, shows that the challenges are enormous and cannot be dealt with instantly.

The approach used by the government of Cameroon in reducing the crisis and its effects on the population has been criticized by many, and propositions have equally been made. *To the prelate, such military action will never solve the Anglophone Crisis* (*The Post*, Friday, January 26, 2018 p2). In this expression, the use of the adverb of frequency “never” indicates that the military action implored by the government is not appropriate and cannot solve the Anglophone crisis. Here, we see that the speaker is in despair about how to stop the crisis. The adverb never in the excerpt above has a negative connotation. Thus, this adverb of frequency is a clear indication that the Cameroon government has never bothered about the Anglophone crisis even though its consequences are felt by the majority of Cameroonians indirectly and by the Anglophone minority

directly. These lexical choices may cause the conflict to escalate, and they may induce hopelessness and uncertainty in the hearts of the reader and cause them to live continually in psychological tension.

The feeling of the perpetuation of the conflict is reported by *The Post* when it says *Nigerian’s Pentecostal preacher, Apostle Johnson Suleman, has made yet another frightening declaration over the ongoing Anglophone Crisis, warning of the worst if more prayers are not said* (*The post*, Monday, April 02, 2018, p7). “Yet,” as used by the writer, shows that much about the Anglophone crisis is frightening. The use of this adverb might have resulted from the fact that the speaker saw unwelcoming events about the crisis. Thus this adverb of continuity is a clear indicator that the crisis does not just limit to the time when there were limited calamities incurred but that the calamities would be greater in the future. Many declarations have been made of the worsening of the crisis, and the use of “yet” signals the continuation of the conflict.

Whereas most of the adverbs used in *The Post* tend to be liable to inflating the conflict, *Cameroon Tribune* tends to use either positive or neutral adverbs. For example, in the headline “The people have clearly expressed their minds” (*CT*, Monday, October 23, 2017), the adverb “clearly”, is neutral. It cannot inflate the conflict nor deflate it. This, therefore, implies that the use of language with caution, especially when reporting on sensitive phenomena like the Anglophone crisis, is essential.

Adjectives are used to describe people and events and are very important in news texts. Even though they are commonly used in news stories, care should be taken; if not, subjectivity will creep in since adjectives create favorable and unfavorable impressions (Merrill 1965). It is noticed that the producers of news stories of these selected newspapers have used dead adjectives that are to a large extent connotative and negative. Adjectives like, bloody, unidentified, worse, and worrisome present negative images about the situation in the North West and southwest regions of Cameroon. For example,

- 1) *The worrisome situation of Lebialem where the locals refused any consultations with government envoys resulting in arson on their MP’s house, seems one of the rare places where dialogue has hit the rocks* (*CT*, Friday, 20 October 2017, p2)
- 2) *Unidentified gunmen shoot 2 Gendarmes, women in B’da* (*The Post*, November 10, 2017)
- 3) *After bloody May, ICG warns about worse days ahead* (*The Post*, July 16, 2018)
- 4) *Explosion in Bamenda: President Paul Biya Orders Special Measures* (*CT*, Friday, September 22, 2017, p5)
- 5) *Calm returns after the turbulent weekend* (*CT*, Monday 21 November 2017, p2)

Worrisome is an adjective that describes the magnitude of the crisis and shows that the crisis is a big challenge to the government, separatist fighters, and all Cameroonians. The speaker, at this instance, is unable to comprehend the

situation. “Worrisome” gives a very negative tone to the crisis, thus liable to causing the crisis to escalate. The adjective “bloody”, describes the type of events that characterize demonstrations due to the crisis. It equally lies on the scale of negative tone and rightfulness and deadliness. It suggests that it is a blood bath battle with no direction and whose end is unpredictable.

Unidentified suggests confusion and uncertainty. If those involved in the exactions cannot be identified (as separatist fighters or government defense forces), it means there is still no foreseeable end to the war. This is because to envisage a solution to the problem; the first thing would have been a distinctive identification of the social and belligerent actors. If nothing is identified, the escalation may continue.

The “special” in the special measures ordered by the President Paul Biya falls under the ideology of the writer. The use of “special” to describe measures taken by the government suppresses the explicit measures that have to be taken in relation to the explosion in Bamenda. Judging from these cases, one can conclude that ideological assumptions in texts are generally implicit rather than explicit. This is in line with Fairclough (1995), who holds that ideology is most active when its works are least visible.... and that invisibility is achieved when ideologies are brought to discourse not as explicit elements of the text, but as ... background assumptions.

Verbs, on the other hand, whether in the passive or active form, indicate action. This action is either performed by an actor who is backgrounded or foregrounded, or suppressed altogether. For example,

Corporal MballaBikoe Arnaud died in the war against Boko Haram, and Pupil Gendarme BessalaBessalaContrand was killed in operation to secure the South West Region. (CT Friday, March 17, 2017, p3)

The verbs died and killed above, explicitly and implicitly, carry different shades of meaning. The writer wants the reader to see that died is neutral, and it could happen to that corporal MballaBikoe the way it did. When someone dies, we may even think that a disease might have killed him, which is a natural phenomenon. But when the writer presents the second soldier (the gendarme) as being killed, he/she is trying to say that someone was responsible for his death and that person should be punished or that the death of the gendarme who was killed should be avenged. Otherwise, it would have been written as such: *Corporal MballaBikoe Arnaud and Pupil Gendarme BessalaBessalaContrand died in the war against Boko Haram and in operation to secure the South West Region.* With this, the act of death is neutralized, and this will not escalate the conflict.

The different newspapers have extensively used grammatical lexis like adverbs, adjectives, verbs, and phrasal verbs in reporting on the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. They use words in a way to show to the reader, the intensity of the crisis and that the war is serious, affecting all Cameroonians with the government inclusive, but no solution to the crisis has been found yet.

The way the Anglophone crisis is reported in *Cameroon Tribune* newspaper shows the government’s determination to resolve the crisis. An indirect quotation indicates that*the President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul Biya, Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, returning from an official visit abroad on 30 November 2017, resolved to restore peace and serenity in the Regions concerned* (CT, Monday, December 11 2017). The verb “resolved” gives hope to those who are yearning for normalcy in the Anglophone regions and shows not only the engagement of the Head of state but also his determination to see that peace and serenity reign in these regions of crisis. The verb “resolved” is a positive word and indicates that the conflict will stop when the President engages to restore peace and serenity in the Regions concerned. With the use of the verb “resolved”, the writer uses language to contribute to deescalating the conflict.

While *Cameroon Tribune* newspaper engages in using language that can deescalate the conflict, *The Post* seems to report differently. For example,

- 1) *50.000 villagers trapped as military battles ‘Ambazonia Fighters’ (The Post, May 04, 2018)*
- 2) *Discipline master killed in Kumba in an attack (The Post, April 17, 2018)*
- 3) *Troops arrest mark Baretta’s mother, demand son (The Post, April 17, 2018)*
- 4) *The 55 persons arrested in relation to the violence committed in recent months in the two regions benefited from the Head of State’s order to stop the discontinuance of proceedings (CT, Monday, September 04, 2017, p2)*

In examples 1, 2, and 3 above, the verbs “battles”, “trapped,” “killed,” and “arrest” carry negative connotations that reflect violence in the crisis. The use of the lexemes in their respective statements, as shown above in the newspaper, will normally have an impact on the minds of those reading the paper. The reader may possibly live in fear of being arrested, killed, or trapped. The writers could use words that are neutral in presenting events. Thus, instead of “battle”, the writer could use “encounter”, instead of “killed,” the writer could use “died,” and instead of “arrest”, they could use “take into custody”. The use of synonyms in place of these negative lexical choices might de-escalate rather than escalate the crisis. It should be noted from above that although the two newspapers use the word “arrest” as in examples 3 and 4 above, *The Post’s* “arrest” is negative while that of *Cameroon Tribune* is positive. This is seen in Bulow Moller (1988:83), who maintains that “there is no such thing as a free choice; no two expressions convey precisely the same message”. This author believes that there are no words that can be said to mean practically, or even exactly the same. This implies that one word or expression can convey different messages, and two different words or expressions can convey the same message.

Nominalizations

Nominalizations are nouns that are derived from verbs or adjectives morphologically. The nominalizations that are derived from verbs or adjectives, usually end in suffixes such as -ness, -tion, -ment, -ity, -or, -er, -ism, etc., and their plural forms. Their realizations in news text function to background or foregrounds actors of events or to render nouns to abstract ideas. For example

- 1) *Survivors are receiving treatment in the Bamenda Regional Hospital and Mbingo Baptist Hospital. (CT, Monday 21 November 2017, p2)*
- 2) *The agitations are arguably the hottest potato in the mouth of the New Deal Regime, and the response thus far is read differently by different people depending on how they see the crisis. (CT, Monday, November 06, 2017, p7)*
- 3) *The launching of recruitment for Anglophone students into the field of Magistracy and court Registrars demonstrate a listening ear from the government (CT, Thursday, May 17, 2017, p4)*
- 4) *Solution to Anglophone Crisis is Pacified, Open, Visible Dialogue (The Post, Friday, July 16, 2018, p2)*
- 5) *Jean-Jacques Ekindi, the President of the Progressive Movement Party, has said Federalism remains the best solution to the Anglophone Crisis. (The Post, Friday, July 16, 2018, p2)*

Nominalization also turns verbs (actions or events) into nouns (things or concepts) so that the text no longer describes actions, but rather focuses on objects or concepts. It also has the potential of making actions and processes into abstract things. For example,

- 1) *Collaboration between the population and security officers helped in the arrest of terrorists who wreaked havoc in the localities even as investigations continue to nap fleeing brigands. (CT, Tuesday, December 05, 2017, p8)*
- 2) *When this reporter visited Belo and Fundong days ago at 10.00am, markets, houses, schools, and public offices were all deserted following the February 1 turmoil that was triggered by the killing of two Gendarmerie officers by "Amba Tigers" (The Post, Friday, February 16, 2018, p2)*
- 3) *The death of chief Nwese of Esukutang village in Toko Subdivision of the Southwest Region and father of a military captain serving in Manyu Division has been confirmed. (The Post, Friday, February 16, 2018, p3)*
- 4) *Following is the statement of the Minister of Communication, IssaTchiromaBakary, during a press conference in Yaoundé on November 10, 2017 on the aftermath of the attack and killing of Gendarmes in the North West and Southwest Regions. (CT, Monday 13 November 2017, p4)*

The reporter is backgrounded probably because the revelation of the person who reported the incident might provoke upheaval. The writer, in reporting in like manner,

de-escalates the conflict but the event itself is a negative event that can provoke conflict and thus may escalate the crisis to another level. The use of "reporter" in this case is a special technique used by the writer to integrate information into fewer words (Chafe 1982).

Death is a noun derived from the verb die. The excerpt indicates that there was doubt about the death of the chief... but now the doubt has been cleared. The writer, in this instance, also tries to make it certain and true in the mind of the reader that chief Nwese of Esukutang village in Toko Subdivision of the Southwest Region actually died and that he was the father of a military captain serving in Manyu Division. Announcing a death in this way provokes rioting. In instances like this, the writer might use euphemism. It could thus read, "the passing on of Chief Nwese of Esukutang village in Toko Subdivision of the Southwest Region and father of a military captain serving in Manyu Division has been confirmed" "passing on" would be easy for the reader to absorb than "death".

Attack and arrest are verbs but are used as a noun in examples 1 and 4 above. The use of these verbs as nouns transforms actions and processes into abstract things. In presenting "arrest" as such, the writer tries to formalize the arrest. **Attack**, on the other hand, is foregrounded. We are not told in the text about the actor or actors of this action. The action is foregrounded in the noun **attack**.

Nouns, especially nouns from the process of nominalization, have their parts to play in conflict escalation or de-escalations. Fairclough (1992a, 46) puts it that the notion of ideology suggests distortion and manipulation of the truth in pursuit of specific interests. This implies that, trying to obscure the agent of an action is purely ideological, and the speaker's intention is made manifest. From what Fowler (1991:66) observed, the reporting of texts comes from a specific ideological point of view. He says: "anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position: language is not a clear window but a refracting, structuring medium" (p. 10). The issue at this juncture is that, the nouns used above have negative tones, which are liable to escalate the Anglophone crisis.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Most of the adverbs used in *The Post* are geared towards inflating the conflict, but *Cameroon Tribune* uses either positive or neutral adverbs. The research found out that the situations, events, and people involved in the crisis are described using adjectives. The writer's ideologies are seen in the descriptions through the explicit elements of description, and this has the potentials to escalate the conflict. The study equally reveals that nouns that are derived from verbs or adjectives morphologically turn verbs (actions or events) into nouns (things or concepts) so that the text no longer describes actions, but rather focuses on objects or concepts and abstract things. In doing this, the writer formalizes certain actions and also justifies the action of perpetrators by using verbs as nouns; for example, attack

(verb) and attack (noun); arrest (verb) and arrest (noun). It also discovers that writers use nouns, especially from the processes of nominalization, to distort and manipulate the truth in pursuit of specific interests. The study then reveals that verbs are used to indicate action and express peoples' thoughts and feelings. It is also revealed that verbs explicitly and implicitly carry different shades of meaning, and the way the writer presents them would (not) escalate the conflict.

As earlier indicated, this research was designed to explore whether, with implicit reflection on the language used in reporting conflict, we could observe the effects of using certain lexemes on the escalation of the crisis. The results revealed that newspaper writers use many lexemes and expressions that are geared towards the escalation of the crisis. These lexemes and expressions do carry in them both explicit and implicit violent attitudes about the crisis. Fairclough (1992b) argues that a text's choice of wording depends on, and helps create, social relationships between participants. He posits that the lexemes used for representing a certain reality are an essential dimension of the construction of meaning.

The inclusive and exclusive pronouns (*We, Us, Our* versus *They, Them, they are*) in news reporting on the Anglophone crisis are based on the sense of the insiders (inclusive) accusing the outsiders (exclusive) for negative actions and probably accounts for the escalation of the Anglophone Crisis in the two English-speaking regions of the country. Adverbs, adjectives, verbs, and nominalizations are used by newspaper reporters and editors in a way that may inflame the conflict. For example, adverbs like "yet", "frightening", "warning," and "worst", renders the future of the crisis gloomy and infinite. This notwithstanding, some adverbs like "finally" reflect some positive aspects of the crisis and show hope.

Adjectives like, **bloody, unidentified, worse,** and **worrisome** present negative images about the situation in the North West and southwest regions of Cameroon. When these words are used, they may cause the conflict to escalate. Unlike adverbs and adjectives, **verbs**, whether in the passive or active form, specify which action has been taken by the actor. The study discovers that the verbs died and killed, explicitly and implicitly carry embedded shades of meaning. The actions performed by the actors of the writer are ideological. Nnamani (2012) points out that verb as well as other linguistic elements express peoples' thoughts and feelings.

Nominalizations, as indicated before, are nouns that are derived from verbs or adjectives morphologically. The words *survivors, agitations, recruitment, solution, federalism, reporter, and proposal* are some of the words derived through nominalization. Nominalizations in this work function to background or foreground actors of events or to render nouns to abstract ideas. The use of "nominalizations" is a special technique used by the writer to integrate information into fewer words (Chafe 1982). This research, therefore, revealed that nouns, especially nouns from the

process of nominalization, have their parts to play in conflict escalation or de-escalations. Fairclough (1992b) puts it that the notion of ideology suggests distortion and manipulation of the truth in pursuit of specific interests. This implies that, trying to background or suppress the agent of an action is purely ideological, and the speaker's intention is made manifest.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper examines articles on the Anglophone crisis in *The Cameroon Tribune* and *The Post* newspapers from 2016-2018. It focused on linguistic features in news items. Comparatively, on numerous aspects of coverage, the two newspapers resemble each other. These selected newspapers produce shared perspectives and discourses that are similar yet unevenly realized, across the studied elements. In all respects, the analysis of the reporting of the crisis points to the conclusion that the conflict is being represented as a war against secessionists and not against the Anglophones of the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. The analyses unveil some ideological stances of the reporters, which are accomplished through the use of linguistic features. Therefore, the way language is used in reporting the conflict in newspapers may escalate the conflict rather than de-escalate.

We recommend that reporters should use less emotive lexical choices. They should try to be objective in reporting. Fairclough (1989, 85) writes: "ideology tends to be most active when its works are least visible..." The ideologies of the reporter should be to promote peace rather than to instill upheaval.

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