



Linguo-Stylistic Analysis of the Leadership Editorial on the Nigerian Social Crisis in 2026

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Abstract

This paper takes a critical look at the way English language is used in editorials of Nigerian Newspapers to effectively communicate sensitive issues. The study explores the linguistic and communicative significance of the editorials of “Leadership” newspaper in influencing readers’ attitudes as regards to the social vices in Nigeria, especially on the issue of insecurity, corruption, kidnapping and other prevalent social crisis in the country. The main objectives are to identify those linguistic features and stylistically analysed, with a view to discover the communicative goals of the choice of nouns, noun phrases, adjectival/adverbial phrases that have been used distinctively by the editorial of “Leadership” newspaper to portray and create schemas in the mind of the readers about the prevalent social crises. Editorial writers in Nigeria have consistently manipulated language to achieve their aims. As a means to an end, language is a tool used in achieving a variety of communicative goals or meeting certain needs imposed upon human life and experiences. The analysis is based on the editorial in the “Leadership” newspaper of the Tuesday 16, 2026. The findings demonstrate that a good writer consciously manipulates linguistic and stylistic devices in order to communicate his desired goal effectively.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Editorials, communicative goals, Nigerian Crisis, Nigerian Newspaper, Leadership Newspaper.

Review Article

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1. Introduction

Linguistic stylistics is a fertile ground for investigation of communicative goals and an intricate of linguistic features that function in any text both literary and non- literary that pleat in order to create the individuality of the discourse, and the impact of the text on the reader. It is obvious in the newspapers reportage, especially in their editorials that linguistic stylistics displays multiple linguistic levels of analysis, i.e. lexical choices, morphological, syntactic, semantics and discourse

analysis. The concepts of style and stylistics may never be clearly defined due to its highly interdisciplinary nature. However, Style is therefore, not just ornamental to writing, but it expresses the many choices a writer makes in the course of his writing; and it is these choices that set apart one writer from the other.

Newspaper editorials share relatively common features, but they differ in style and organisation. They also play a vital role in shaping public opinion as they deal with topical issues (up-to-date events

within the society). The readers employ their social experiences to develop some forms of schemas about the existing topical issues (Nigerian Crisis) to interpret the text. Therefore, editorials are considered influential as they influence the opinion of the public and gain control of the people's minds. Therefore an editorial is like "the voice of the people"; as such it is expected to promote public interest. The newspapers objectivity in reporting topical issues might be discovered through stylistic analysis of the linguistic features of the editorial (Linguo-Stylistic Analysis).

2. Style and Linguistic Analysis

Some scholars consider stylistics to be the linguistic study of literature or a linguistic approach to literature. Properly put, stylistics is the study of the language of literature (Syal and Jindal, 2010; Norgaard and Busse, 2010: 1). It is concerned with the ways meaning is created through language in literature and in other non-fictional texts. However, contemporary stylistics has shown interest in the linguistic features of other discourses. Consequently, stylistic approaches can be employed to study non-fictional or non-literary texts like advertising, academic writing, political speeches, news reporting, editorials and other semiotic regimes as TV and pictorial advertising, film, multimodal publications, etc.

These scholars largely make use of linguistic models, theories, and frameworks in the analysis of texts so as to enable them to explain how and why a text appears the way it does and how and why it yields itself to certain or different dimensions of meaning. They pay close attention to the peculiar linguistic features which may be identified and studied under the headings such as lexis, grammar, semantics, phonology, or sound patterns. They also critically examine the discoursal features of texts and the cognitive aspects involved in the processing of those features by the reader. A detailed account of some (or all) of these features enables the analyst to arrive at a more objective interpretation or evaluation of a text.

Enkvist (1973), Todd (1969), Leech and Short (1981), Crystal and Davy (1976), Azuike (1992)

among others explained the concept of style. The definitions are inexhaustible considering the inherent nebulous nature of the concept. Leech and Short (1981) claim that style is sometimes apply to the linguistic habits of a particular writer at other times; it has been applied to the way language is used in a particular genre, period or school of writing. From this definition, style is seen as a manifestation of the individual writer. However, Azuike (1992) realises that style seeks to establish symmetry between a person's expressive capacity and his other characteristic. Style in this sense is seen as the individual's identity, or the expression of an individual's personality and vision of the reality. What is accepted as a norm by one ground may not necessarily hold for another group. Therefore, the norm can be a product of conscious codification of a set of "correct" or "proper" usage accepted within a speech community.

Another manifestation of style as highlighted by Crystal and Davy (1969) is, "some or all the language habits of an individual". They use the word "singularity" to mean a pattern, which a speaker or writer can achieve; or attributable and exclusive or peculiar to him. Most notions of style as we have seen carry with them an implication vis-a-vis generality. Enkvist (Ibid) observes that style is notoriously slippery and difficult to codify into concrete terms that allow operational study. Therefore, it can be summed up as a shell surrounding a pre-existing core of thought or expression; as the choice between alternative expressions; as a set of individual characteristics; as deviation from a norm; as a set of collective characteristics; as those relations among linguistic entities that are stable in terms of wider spans of text.

Burton's (1982) radical stylistic views seek to negotiate an interface between style and language, between power and discourse. For Burton (1982), stylistic analysis is not just a question of discussing effects in language and text; it is a powerful method of understanding the ways in which all sorts of realities are constructed through language. It seeks an understanding of the relationships between language as represented thought and the socio-linguistic construction of reality. Burton realises

that stylistics seeks to handle competently a coherent and comprehensive descriptive grammar to be used in literary or linguistically oriented studies. Therefore like Halliday, Burton claims that stylistics is a “way into” a text. It points the way to understanding the ways in which the language of a given text constructs its own reality.

This is to kindle a spark of interest in the potential reader, who on the average, is a person whose eye moves swiftly down a page to see what will capture his attention.

There is neither a consensus amongst linguists on what its aims are nor a uniform approach in methodology for its analysis.

The term “style” has been an elusive term and that it has continued to defy a simple definition (Idiagbon, 2007). It means different things to different people. In English studies, style can be regarded as a distinct method of speaking or writing. This definition involves the choice of vocabulary, phrase, or sentence structure. A person’s style may be described as ‘good or bad; simple or complex’ according to its effectiveness in achieving the purpose of the speaker or writer. Crystal and Davy (1969) realised that lexical features may have different meanings when they are used at different contexts. According to them, one can easily differentiate a religious sermon from sports commentary or an advertisement from a news item, because of the lexical features which are used in each of them. Despite the elusiveness of the term, Crystal and Davy (1969) identified four commonly occurring senses of the term “Style”. According to them, these four senses need to be differentiated in any stylistic analysis. The first sense refers to some or all of the language habits of one person, as Shakespeare’s Style (s) or Style of James Joyce. This sense according to them is often confused with an individual’s personality. However, these theorists warn that it is impracticable to discuss all the speech or writing habits of a person.

The second sense refers to some or all of the language habits shared by a group of people at one time, or even a period of time, as when talking about the Style of the Augustan poets, the Style of old English heroic poetry, the Style in which civil

service forms are written, or Styles of public speaking (Crystal and Davy, 1969: 10). This second sense is important for us in this study, because it is the sense in which we understand the notion of “newspaper language”, which is the focus of our study.

In the third sense of the term “style”, Crystal and Davy (1969) gave a more restrictive meaning of style as an evaluative method referring to the effectiveness of a mode of expression. It is in this sense that style is often defined as “saying the right thing in the most effective way”. It is also in this sense that style is said to be the same as “good manners”. This sense is not the concern of the present study, because there would be no stylistic tools, which measure the level of effectiveness or otherwise regarding the choice of language. The variables to be measured may even be grammaticality, acceptability, or texture, which are not the main concern of Stylistic analysis.

The fourth and the last sense, as posited by Crystal and Davy (1969: 10), refers to literary language. They observe that:

Style has long been associated primarily exclusively with literature, as a characteristic of “good effective” or “beautiful” writing for example, and the focus of the literary critic attention alone.

With these four senses of style in mind, Crystal and Davy described their proposition as to the preferred approach. They argue that their approach prefers to see style in the first and second senses. That is to say, they understand style more as the language habits of either an individual or a group or texts. Then they believe that the main aim of Stylistics is to analyse language habits with the main purpose of identifying, from the general mass linguistic features common to English as used on every conceivable occasion, to those features which are restricted to certain kinds of social contexts.

3. Methodology

The approach adopted for this study is text-oriented stylistic analysis proposed by Simpson (2004) because stylistics itself is described as linguistic

study of different styles. This is enhanced by the juxtaposition of different words and phrases which are eye catching. Editorials have consistent styles of using the words and phrases to capture the readers' minds to develop certain schemas in an attempt to interpret the text. Therefore, this study rely heavily on those words and phrases that are capable of providing such kinds of schemas as proposed by Bartlett (2010) schema theory in stylistics as a culmination of cognitive psychology, linguistics and Discourse Analysis. It explains how human beings organise knowledge in their minds and use that structured knowledge to interpret new information. So, since it is related to the mind, human beings construct different kinds of stories. These stories are there in their minds and use them to interpret a new knowledge. Schema is a mental framework or blueprint that helps us to to make sense of the words or phrases. Editorials use words and phrases extraordinarily to describe certain events or phenomena, such as crisis: kidnapping, killings, educational dilapidation, corruption and so on. This paper centred on the choice of words and phrases that are stylistically relevant in providing those mental discoveries and capable of developing those schemas in the minds of the readers. The study is both quantitative and qualitative.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Data Presentation

- I. Nigeria confronts today not a **succession of misfortunes** but something altogether **more menacing**: a convergence of them.
- II. Across this **vast, fractious republic, insecurity, hunger**, the progressive **demolition of education**, and the accelerating **erosion of institutional trust** are no longer running along separate tracks.
- III. They have **fused** into a single, defining **national affliction**.
- IV. What lends this moment its **particular gravity** — and its **acute political urgency** — is not the weight of any single **crisis** in isolation, but the manner in which each amplifies and entrenches the others, constructing a **self-reinforcing cycle** that now **presses against the very foundations of the Nigerian state**.
- V. From the North-East through the North-West and deep into the Middle Belt, across **the troubled corridors** of the South-East and South-South, and reaching now into portions of the SouthWest, **insecurity** has long **forfeited its status** as emergency.
- VI. It has attained, **with grim efficiency**, the character of the ordinary.
- VII. **Kidnappings, banditry, violent disruption** — these are no longer events that punctuate normal life; they have become, for millions of Nigerians, **the very substance** of it.
- VIII. The continued **captivity of abducted schoolchildren** and fresh episodes of **mass abduction** are not **anomalies** to be explained away.
- IX. They are **the most legible evidence** of a **structural failure in the state's most elemental obligation: the protection of its citizens**.
- X. **When men and women begin to calibrate their lives — where to travel, whether to farm, which school to hazard** — according to the **cartography of fear**, governance has ceased to **hold practical meaning**.
- XI. **The state's monopoly on organised force**, that bedrock upon **which every other institutional function ultimately rests**, commands no **reliable writ** across **vast swathes of national territory**.
- XII. In its absence, **economic life** contracts, **communities fracture**,

and the **social fabric** thins to the **point of rupture**.

XIII. **Nowhere** does **insecurity** exact a **more devastating** or **more durably consequential** toll than upon **education**.

XIV. **Across numerous states**, schools have ceased to **function as sanctuaries** and become **symbols of exposure**.

XV. **Abductions of students** have **forced closures**, **suppressed attendance**, and **broken the confidence of parents** compelled to **weigh literacy against loss**.

XVI. Teachers — ensnared in a **crisis entirely** of the state's making — are **withdrawing, striking, and refusing to serve** under conditions the render safe.

XVII. **The damage** extends **far beyond the school gates**, and **far beyond the present moment**.

XVIII. **Children** expelled from **structured learning** seldom return in their original numbers.

XIX. **Disruption** becomes **desertion**; **desertion** becomes a **permanent deficit** in human capital — **the very resource upon which any credible project of national renewal must be built**.

XX. **The country that cannot guarantee the safety of its classrooms** is engaged, whether it acknowledges **the fact or not**, in **the quiet consumption of its own future**.

XXI. Meanwhile, **economic hardship** continues to **constrict the circumstances of ordinary Nigerians** with a **cruelty** that is simultaneously **statistical and acutely personal**.

XXII. Soaring food prices, **collapsing household purchasing power**, and **entrenched unemployment** have conspired to produce **what can only be called survival** economics — a daily arithmetic of **untenable choices** between **food, schooling, medicine, and movement**.

XXIII. In Northern Nigeria, **the convergence of insecurity and hunger** is rendered in **the starkest terms**: **farmlands** lie abandoned, **local markets** have withered, **supply chains** severed at source.

XXIV. **The consequence** is not **inflationary disturbance** of the conventional kind.

XXV. It is **food insecurity** rooted in **structural violence** — **pitiably so**.

XXVI. For many families, **this crisis** lies beyond **the reach of policy vocabulary**.

XXVII. It is not denominated in **basis points** or **measured against reform timelines**.

XXVIII. It is counted in **skipped meals**, in children dispatched to **bed unfed**, in women **weighing a bag of rice** against **a school fee**.

XXIX. **Economic reform**, however technically warranted, cannot manufacture **legitimacy** **absent visible, felt relief**.

XXX. Without it, **public frustration** hardens, and **the social contract** does not so much break as **quietly dissolve**.

XXXI. Perhaps **the most consequential dimension of Nigeria's present predicament** is also **the least easily quantified**: **the widening chasm** between official assurance and **the reality citizens** actually inhabit.

- XXXII. **Government ministers** insist **that reforms** are **bearing fruit** that **the trajectory** is upward, **that patience** will be rewarded.
- XXXIII. **Millions of Nigerians** will be rewarded.
- XXXIV. **Millions of Nigerians** experience **an entirely different country** — defined by **privation, insecurity,** and **the conspicuous absence of functioning institutions.**
- XXXV. This is not **a failure of communication.**
- XXXVI. It is **a crisis of credibility.**
- XXXVII. **When citizens can no longer recognise their lived experience in official pronouncements,** confidence in **the institutions responsible for those pronouncements** begins **its hollowing.**
- XXXVIII. Policies may be **technically defensible;** without **the legitimacy that only felt consequence** confers, they fail to command **the cooperation** their success demands.
- XXXIX. **Over time,** governance becomes, in **the perception of the governed,** indistinguishable from theatre.
- XL. No **reform programme,** however **ambitiously conceived,** survives that judgement.
- XLI. **What renders Nigeria's condition distinctly perilous** is **the interlocking architecture** of its **compounding failures.**
- XLII. **Insecurity** devastates **agriculture** and **economic activity.**
- XLIII. **Hardship deepens** vulnerability and **social fracture.**
- XLIV. **Educational collapse** forecloses **future opportunity.**
- XLV. **Declining trust** corrodes **the civic cooperation** on **which recovery** depends.
- XLVI. These are not **separate misfortunes.**
- XLVII. They are **mutually sustaining pathologies,** and no intervention confined to **a single strand** will hold.
- XLVIII. **Nigeria's situation** is **grave.**
- XLIX. It is not, however, **irreversible** — provided **the response** proves commensurate with **the challenge.**
- L. **The window for decisive,** coherent, and **honest national action** remains open.
- LI. It will not **endure indefinitely.**
- LII. **Between drift** and direction, Nigeria must choose.
- LIII. **That choice** is now.
- LIV. And it will **inscribe** itself upon **this nation's story** for **a generation to come.**

4.2 Data Analysis

Table 4.1: Frequency of Exceptional Linguistic Features Usages

S/N	Identified Linguistic Features	Number of occurrence	Frequency (%)
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1	EX NP	76	41
2	EX ADJ/ADV	67	36
3	EX N	29	16
4	TOTAL	172	93

Number of Clauses = 54

EX NP = Exceptional Noun Phrase

EX ADJ/ADV = Exceptional Adjective/Adverbial Phrase

EX N = Exceptional Noun

4.3 Discussion

From the samples above, it can be deduced that there is something different about the content of the editorial which seems to be interested in explaining social crisis in Nigeria. The style of the editorial carries other details about the crisis. The sentence is the vehicle the writer uses to convey the intensity of his message through the choice of various nouns, noun phrases, adjectival and adverbial phrases exceptionally. Maximum effectiveness in communication is achieved by the way a writer uses sentences. The use of the simple sentence is pervasive in the editorial under study. The simple sentence consists of only one clause. The clauses analysed above are simple declarative ones. This feature is typical of editorials. It facilitates direct report of messages. Besides, the clauses are syntactically balanced and complete with all the obligatory sentence elements, as they often present their messages in unambiguous and complete forms.

The editorial explains the failure of security operatives and communal conflicts as the prevalent situation. It further revealed that the pattern has been the same across the country. People became the casualties. The diction a writer uses has great influence on the effectiveness of the message being passed across. He deploys war-related registers passionately through nouns, noun phrases, adjectival phrases and adverbial phrases to inculcate the pictures of the situation, such as: vast swathes of

national territory, communities fracture, social fabric, cartography of fear, violent disruption, demolition of education, hunger, fractious republic, desertion, economic hardship, collapsing household, food insecurity, legitimacy absent, absence of functional institution, a crisis of credibility, damage, kidnapping and many other related registers. He further described the situation of the country by using a metaphor “a grave”, the highest level of description. Therefore, Lexico-Stylistic Analysis discovered that words and phrases are essential in language as they influence the outcome of whatever we write or say. If a register is inadequately used, communication will be impeded. The writer decides to employ simple and concrete words or abstract and obscure words and expressions. A writer’s choice of words determines the aesthetic appreciation of that piece of writing. The editorials in their choice of lexical items draw from a wide range of registers. Simple diction that is appropriate to the situation of things is used in the editorials. The register associated to war or crisis is pervasive in the editorial of *Leadership* to describe the level of the societal crisis in Nigeria. The tone of the writer towards this issue is clearly seen from his choice of words. The writer’s diction presents his attitude and actual feelings to his readers. The tone could be sarcastic, ironic, pessimistic, humorous, or that of anger and acceptance. The writer is also sympathetic towards the state of the unending social crisis in Nigeria.

5. Conclusion

It is obvious from the analyses of the editorial carried out in this study, that the language of editorials is more often than not exhibiting some unique features. Language and news reporting is inseparable. Linguistic items were carefully selected

by the editorials to achieve their intentions and goals. It was discovered that the writer used simple and precise words which enhanced the clarity of the text. Words associated with war or crisis pervaded the editorial. Other words used are those associated to the educational dilapidation and registers associated to the incessancy of the crisis. Various sentence types were employed to sustain the readers' interest. The tone of the writers was sometimes sarcastic, pessimistic, that of concern and sympathy. Various stylistic features were also used.

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APPENDIX (Source of Data)

LEADERSHIP EDITORIAL (TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2026)

Our Stand

A Nation under Strain

Nigeria confronts today not a succession of misfortunes but something altogether more menacing: a convergence of them. Across this vast, fractious republic, insecurity, hunger, the progressive demolition of education, and the accelerating erosion of institutional trust are no longer running along separate tracks. They have fused into a single, defining national affliction. What lends this moment its particular gravity — and its acute political urgency — is not the weight of any single crisis in isolation, but the manner in which each amplifies and entrenches the others, constructing a self-reinforcing cycle that now presses against the very foundations of the Nigerian state. From the North-East through the North-West and deep into the Middle Belt, across the troubled corridors of the South-East and South-South, and reaching now into portions of the SouthWest, insecurity has long forfeited its status as emergency. It has attained, with grim efficiency, the character of the ordinary. Kidnappings, banditry, violent disruption — these are no longer events that punctuate normal life; they have become, for millions of Nigerians, the very substance of it. The continued captivity of abducted schoolchildren and fresh episodes of mass abduction are not anomalies to be explained away. They are the most legible

evidence of a structural failure in the state's most elemental obligation: the protection of its citizens. When men and women begin to calibrate their lives — where to travel, whether to farm, which school to hazard — according to the cartography of fear, governance has ceased to hold practical meaning. The state's monopoly on organised force, that bedrock upon which every other institutional function ultimately rests, commands no reliable writ across vast swathes of national territory. In its absence, economic life contracts, communities fracture, and the social fabric thins to the point of rupture. Nowhere does insecurity exact a more devastating or more durably consequential toll than upon education. Across numerous states, schools have ceased to function as sanctuaries and become symbols of exposure. Abductions of students have forced closures, suppressed attendance, and broken the confidence of parents compelled to weigh literacy against loss. Teachers — ensnared in a crisis entirely of the state's making — are withdrawing, striking, and refusing to serve under conditions the render safe. The damage extends far beyond the school gates, and far beyond the present moment. Children expelled from structured learning seldom return in their original numbers. Disruption becomes desertion; desertion becomes a permanent deficit in human capital — the very resource upon which any credible project of national renewal must be built. The country that cannot guarantee the safety of its classrooms is engaged, whether it acknowledges the fact or not, in the quiet consumption of its own future. Meanwhile, economic hardship continues to constrict the circumstances of ordinary Nigerians with a cruelty that is simultaneously statistical and acutely personal. Soaring food prices, collapsing household purchasing power, and entrenched unemployment have conspired to produce what can only be called survival economics — a daily arithmetic of untenable choices between food, schooling, medicine, and movement. In Northern Nigeria, the convergence of insecurity and hunger is rendered in the starkest terms: farmlands lie abandoned, local markets have withered, supply chains severed at source. The consequence is not inflationary disturbance of the conventional kind. It is food insecurity rooted in structural violence — pitilessly

so. For many families, this crisis lies beyond the reach of policy vocabulary. It is not denominated in basis points or measured against reform timelines. It is counted in skipped meals, in children dispatched to bed unfed, in women weighing a bag of rice against a school fee. Economic reform, however technically warranted, cannot manufacture legitimacy absent visible, felt relief. Without it, public frustration hardens, and the social contract does not so much break as quietly dissolve. Perhaps the most consequential dimension of Nigeria's present predicament is also the least easily quantified: the widening chasm between official assurance and the reality citizens actually inhabit. Government ministers insist that reforms are bearing fruit that the trajectory is upward, that patience will be rewarded. Millions of Nigerians will be rewarded. Millions of Nigerians experience an entirely different country — defined by privation, insecurity, and the conspicuous absence of functioning institutions. This is not a failure of communication. It is a crisis of credibility. When citizens can no longer recognise their lived experience in official pronouncements, confidence in the institutions responsible for those pronouncements begins its hollowing. Policies may be technically defensible; without the legitimacy that only felt consequence confers, they fail to command the cooperation their success demands. Over time, governance becomes, in the perception of the governed, indistinguishable from theatre. No reform programme, however ambitiously conceived, survives that judgement. What renders Nigeria's condition distinctly perilous is the interlocking architecture of its compounding failures. Insecurity devastates agriculture and economic activity. Hardship deepens vulnerability and social fracture. Educational collapse forecloses future opportunity. Declining trust corrodes the civic cooperation on which recovery depends. These are not separate misfortunes. They are mutually sustaining pathologies, and no intervention confined to a single strand will hold. Nigeria's situation is grave. It is not, however, irreversible — provided the response proves commensurate with the challenge. The window for decisive, coherent, and honest national action remains open. It will not endure indefinitely. Between drift and direction,

Nigeria must choose. That choice is now. And it will inscribe itself upon this nation's story for a generation to come.

MISSION STATEMENT

LEADERSHIP is a national paper symbolically embedded in the nation's capital. We shall stand up for good governance. We shall defend the interest of Nigerian people even against their rulers, and we

shall raise our pen at all times in defence of what is right. These are the values by which we intend to be assessed. We shall never, ever for any reason forget the noble reason of our coming into being: FOR GOD AND COUNTRY! EDITOR: Martin Ayankola FOUNDING CHAIRMAN Sam Nda-Isaiah (1962 - 2020) CHAIRMAN: Zainab Nda-Isaiah EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Azu Ishiekwe DIRECTORS: Mike Okpere Muazu Elazeh Abraham Nda-Isaiah M