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A Stylistic Analysis of Selected Newspaper Headlines on Fuel Subsidy Removal in Nigeria

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Abstract
This study conducts a stylistic analysis of selected The Punch and The Nigerian Tribune newspapers' headlines on fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria, with the aim of examining how linguistic choices reflect and shape public discourse on a highly controversial national policy. Drawing upon Stylistic Pluralism and Systemic Functional Linguistics as theoretical frameworks, the research analyzes five headlines from The Punch and Nigerian Tribune, focusing on graphological, morphological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic features. The findings reveal that newspapers employ a range of stylistic devices such as ellipsis, nominalization, evaluative language, and metaphor to construct ideational meanings, establish interpersonal relations, and organize textual information. These linguistic strategies are used not only to inform but also to persuade, sensationalize, or influence public perception, often aligning with ideological biases. The study concludes that media language plays a crucial role in framing socio-political issues, highlighting the importance of critical reading in interpreting headline narratives.

Keywords: stylistic, Nigerian

Background to the Study

Fuel subsidy had been a major source of government expenditure in Nigeria, with huge sums being spent annually to keep petrol prices artificially low. This led to the government borrowing heavily to finance the subsidy, which in turn increased the country's deficit. By removing the subsidy, the government hopes to reduce its borrowing and the associated huge deficit, creating more resources for other important sectors such as education, healthcare, security and infrastructure.

Fuel subsidies began in the 1970s and became institutionalized in 1977, following the promulgation of the Price Control Act which made it illegal for some products (including petrol) to be sold above the regulated price. The Olusegun Obasanjo regime introduced this law to cushion the effects of inflation, caused by a worldwide increase in energy prices. While the concept of subsidy itself is noble, its administration in Nigeria was plagued with serious allegations of corruption and mismanagement. However, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in his Inauguration Speech on 29th May 2023, announced to Nigeria and the world that; "the Fuel Subsidy is gone!" signaling the end of the fuel subsidy on Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) adding that the subsidy could no longer justify its ever-increasing costs in the wake of drying resources and instead the funds would be rechannelled into better investment in public infrastructure, education, health care and jobs that would materially improve the lives of millions.

Scope of the Study

This study is concerned with the analysis of the stylistic elements used in the Punch and the Nigerian headlines on fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria. The plurality of coding levels which is one of the two kinds of plurality will be used in the analysis. The study is concerned about the comparison in order to ascertain if there is any form of conformity or uniformity in the style of the Punch and the Nigerian Tribune newspapers. This study uses five (5) selected news headlines on Fuel Subsidy removal news in two of Nigerian daily national newspapers. The

study employs critical qualitative design using stylistic analysis and integrated Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG).

Research Methodology

This study is concerned with the identification and analysis of the stylistic elements and linguistic features in the selected newspapers headlines on fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria. This study examines the linguistic features in the selected newspapers' headlines and lexical analysis, grammatical analysis (ideational metafunction), mood and modality analysis (interpersonal metafunction), thematic and cohesion analysis (textual metafunction) . This study adopts a qualitative research design using stylistic analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) as the primary analytical framework. This research seeks to examine how the selected newspaper headlines on fuel subsidy removal employ linguistic and stylistic choices to construct meaning, influence public perception, and reflect socio-political ideologies. *The Punch and Nigerian Tribune* which are dated from May to December 2023 form the source of data to be analysed

Literature Review

This paper reviews the literature of the study. It examines approaches to study of style and stylistics. The study adopts Stylistic Pluralism as the theoretical framework. It examines the concept of Fuel Subsidy Removal in Nigeria and the role of News Headlines and Empirical Studies on Stylistics.

Overview of Style and Stylistics

Stylistics is a field of study that bridges linguistics and literary criticism, concerned primarily with the analysis of language and style within texts. The concept of style refers to the distinctive way in which language is used by individuals or within specific contexts. It encompasses choices in vocabulary, syntax, tone, and other linguistic features that characterize a speaker or writer's expression. Jakobson (1960) posited that the poetic function of language lies in its ability to draw attention to itself, thereby enhancing its aesthetic and communicative power.

According to Leech & Short (1981), Stylistics emerges as a systematic and empirical approach to studying stylistic features with the goal of uncovering how meaning and effect are generated in texts. The advent of structuralism and the development of modern linguistics by Ferdinand de Saussure, Noam Chomsky, and others, stylistics began to adopt a more scientific and analytical orientation. This transformation led to a range of theoretical approaches that form the basis of contemporary stylistic analysis. Formalist stylistics focuses on the internal features of texts such as phonology, grammar, and semantics while Functional stylistics influenced by Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics examines how language operates in context to fulfill communicative purposes (Halliday, 1978). Cognitive stylistics integrates insights from psychology and cognitive science to check and explore how readers mentally process and interpret texts.

Stylistic analysis operates at several linguistic levels, each offering unique insights into how language functions in texts. At the phonological level, sound patterns like alliteration, rhyme, and rhythm, which contribute to the musicality and emotional resonance of a text are being studied. The graphological level considers visual features such as punctuation, capitalization, and layout, which can influence tone and structure. Lexical analysis focuses on word choice and vocabulary, exploring how diction reveals character, setting, or theme. Grammatical analysis delves into syntax and sentence structure, identifying how variations in grammatical constructions affect clarity, emphasis, and pacing. Semantic analysis investigates meaning, including metaphor, symbolism, and ambiguity, while pragmatic analysis considers the use of language in context, exploring how speaker intent, audience interpretation, and situational factors shape communication.

The practical applications of stylistics are diverse and far-reaching. In literary criticism, stylistics provides tools for objective and systematic analysis of texts, enabling critics to uncover layers of meaning and evaluate artistic quality. In education, stylistics enhances language teaching by helping students recognize stylistic devices and

appreciate their effects. In forensic linguistics, stylistic analysis is used to determine authorship, detect plagiarism, and interpret disputed texts. Media and communication studies benefit from stylistics in analyzing how language constructs ideology, frames public discourse, and shapes audience perception. Translation studies use stylistic insights to preserve tone and effect across languages, ensuring fidelity to the original text (Crystal & Davy, 1969).

Despite its many strengths, stylistics has faced criticisms. Some scholars argue that it overly prioritizes linguistic form at the expense of thematic content, while others caution against the subjective nature of interpretation. However, advances in technology and methodology have addressed many of these concerns. The integration of corpus linguistics, statistical analysis, and empirical testing has added rigor to stylistic research, making it more replicable and transparent (Semino & Short, 2004).

Stylistics is a vital and dynamic discipline that continues to grow in scope and significance. By examining the nuanced ways in which language operates within texts, stylistics enhances our understanding of meaning, creativity, and communication. Whether applied to literature, media, education, or legal discourse, stylistics offers powerful tools for exploring the richness and complexity of human language. Stylistics analysis cannot be done if there is no interest in Stylistics.

Newspaper Headlines in Stylistic Analysis

Newspaper headlines are a unique genre of media language that serves as both a summary and a stimulant crafted to attract attention, convey essential information, and shape audience interpretation of events. In stylistic studies, headlines are seen as a rich site for analyzing how linguistic features perform various functions beyond mere reportage. They reflect deliberate choices in style and structure to achieve economy of language, emotional resonance, and ideological framing (Bell, 1991). These functions are particularly evident in contexts like Nigeria, where political and economic issues such as fuel subsidy removal evoke intense public engagement.

Headlines, by design, are stylistically compressed. They often omit grammatical elements like articles, auxiliary verbs, and even subjects, leading to what is known as "headlinese" a form of journalistic shorthand (Mardh, 1980). For instance, a headline like “Subsidy Gone, Prices Soar” conveys complete meaning while flouting conventional grammatical norms. This intentional compression, from a stylistic point of view, serves both functional and aesthetic purposes creating immediacy and impact.

In addition, the semantics of headlines are often ideologically loaded. Through lexical selection and syntactic framing, newspapers can subtly align with or critique government actions. Terms such as “scrap,” “remove,” “hike,” or “relief” are not neutral, they carry ideological weight that influences the reader's perception. Stylistic analysis thus goes beyond the surface structure to interrogate how newspapers use language to position themselves and frame events such as subsidy removal.

From a Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) perspective, headlines activate the ideational metafunction (representing experiences), interpersonal metafunction (enacting social relations), and textual metafunction (organizing message structure). For instance, the choice between an active construction (“Government Removes Subsidy”) and a passive one (“Subsidy Removed by Government”) reflects differing emphases on agency, blame, or policy framing.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the theoretical perspectives of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as proposed by Halliday (1985), and the concept of Stylistic Pluralism, which has been advanced in the field of literary stylistics to accommodate the complexity and multifunctionality of language use in diverse contexts, particularly in media discourse.

Systemic Functional Linguistics provides a robust model for analyzing language as a resource for making meaning within specific social and cultural contexts. Halliday conceives of language as performing three broad metafunctions: the ideational, which enables speakers to represent experience and construct logical relations; the interpersonal, which facilitates interaction, evaluation, and stance; and the textual, which organizes language

into coherent messages. These metafunctions are particularly relevant to media texts such as newspaper headlines, which condense meanings into highly selective and often ideologically marked forms. Through tools like transitivity analysis, SFL enables the researcher to uncover the ways in which agency is allocated or concealed—for example, whether a headline assigns action to the government or obscures it through passive constructions. Such patterns are rarely neutral and often align with institutional ideologies or editorial positions.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This paper presents, describes and analyses the selected newspapers headlines on Fuel Subsidy Removal in Nigeria in The Punch and Nigerian Tribune newspapers. This study makes use of Stylistic Pluralism, exploring graphological, Morphological, and lexico-semantic features, alongside Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which analyzes ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions of the data presented.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Selected news headlines on Fuel Subsidy Removal in *The Punch* Newspaper

	Headlines	**Date**
Text 1	Postponement of fuel subsidy removal disappointing says Magnus Abe	1st may, 2023
Text 2	Subsidy removal: Abuja traders lament, say high fares killing businesses	2nd of June,2023
Text 3	Fuel subsidy removal big challenge to transport industry - HDTDA President	30th of June,2023
Text 4	Subsidy removal: A measure to rejig the economy	29th of June,2023
Text 5	Subsidy removal has reduced fuel smuggling – Customs	24th of June, 2023

Table 2: Selected news headlines from *Nigerian Tribune* Newspaper

	Headlines	Date
Text 1	Subsidy removal: Residents groan as fuel price soars, long queues persist in C'River	31st of May, 2023
Text 2	Lagos commercial bus drivers back fuel subsidy removal	8th of June,2023
Text 3	Subsidy removal: Pressure FG to revitalise Nigerian refineries, Group tasks NLC, TUC	8th of June, 2023
Text 4	Fuel subsidy removal. Nigerians are suffering, NUJ tells FG	20thof July,2023
Text 5	Fuel subsidy removal: Nigerians are dying, CSO tells Tinubu	27th of July, 2023

Mood & Transitivity Systems in Selected News Headlines

Text 1: Subsidy removal has reduced fuel smuggling- Customs

	Subsidy removal	**has reduced**	**fuel smuggling**	**Customs**
Clause Structure	Subject (S)	Predicator	Complement	Adjunct
Transitivity(Ideational)	Actor	Process (material)	Goal	
Mood Type(Interpersonal)	Declarative			
Theme/Rheme(Textual)	Unmarked (Theme)	Rheme		

Effect: The clause **"Subsidy removal has reduced fuel smuggling – Customs"** is a **declarative sentence** structured with *"subsidy removal"* as the **Subject**, *"has reduced"* as the **Predicator**, *"fuel smuggling"* as the **Complement** (Object), and *"– Customs"* functioning as an **Adjunct**, indicating the

source of the claim. The **process type** is **material**, representing an action or event in the real world. Here, *"subsidy removal"* acts as the **Actor** (the initiator of the action), while *"fuel smuggling"* is the **Goal** (the entity affected by the action). Ideationally, the clause constructs a cause-effect relationship, presenting the removal of subsidy as a policy action that directly impacts illegal fuel trade. The **interpersonal metafunction** is realized through the **declarative mood**, suggesting the speaker's intention to inform or assert a factual claim, with *"Customs"* lending authority to the statement. From a **textual perspective**, the clause begins with an **unmarked Theme** (*"subsidy removal"*, which is also the subject), followed by the **Rheme** (*"has reduced fuel smuggling – Customs"*), which provides the new, informative part of the message. This Theme-Rheme structure ensures a smooth flow of information from what is known or topical to what is newly asserted.

Text 2: Amid soaring prices, economists, CIBN highlight petrol subsidy removal benefits

Clause Structure	**Adjunct (A)**	**Subject (S)**	**Predicator (P)**	**Complement (C)**
	Amid soaring prices,	Economists, CIBN	highlight	petrol subsidy removal benefits
Transitivity (Ideational)		Actor		Goal
Mood Type (Interpersonal)	Declarative			
Theme/Rheme (Textual)		Marked (Theme)	Rheme	

Effect: The clause **"Amid soaring prices, economists, CIBN highlight petrol subsidy removal benefits"** is a declarative sentence, functioning interpersonally to inform the reader. Structurally, it comprises a **marked Theme** ("Amid soaring prices") functioning as a circumstantial Adjunct, followed by the **Subject** ("economists, CIBN"), the **Predicator**("highlight"), and the **Complement** ("petrol subsidy removal benefits"). Experientially, it represents a **material process**, where the **Actors** ("economists, CIBN") perform the action **"highlight"** directed toward the **Goal** ("petrol subsidy removal benefits"), with the **Circumstance** ("Amid soaring prices") setting the economic condition. Textually, the **Theme** is marked because it begins with an adjunct rather than the typical subject, and the **Rheme** carries the new or core message. Overall, the clause constructs meaning by presenting an action taken by institutional actors in response to economic conditions, intending to convey factual information in a structured and cohesive manner.

Text 3:

Atiku cautions against rubberstamp NASS, faults Tinubu on subsidy removal

Clause Structure	**Subject (S)**	**Predicator (P)**	**Adjunct (A)**	**Predicator (P)**	**Complement (C)**	**Adjunct (A)**
	Atiku	cautions	against rubberstamp NASS	Faults	Tinubu	on subsidy removal
Transitivity (Ideational)	Sayer	Process (verbal)	Verbage	Process (material)	Goal	Circumstance
Mood Type (Interpersonal)	Declarative					
Theme/Rheme (Textual)	Unmarked (Theme)	Rheme		Marked (Theme)		Rheme

Effect: The clause complex "Atiku cautions against rubberstamp NASS, faults Tinubu on subsidy removal" is a compound declarative sentence consisting of two coordinated clauses. In the first clause, "Atiku" functions as the **Subject**, "cautions" as the **Predicator**, and "against rubberstamp NASS" as a **Circumstantial Adjunct** indicating the matter of concern; it represents a **verbal process** with *Atiku* as the **Sayer** and the warning directed toward the National Assembly as **Verbiage/Matter**. The second clause has an implied subject (*Atiku*), "faults" as the **Predicator**, "Tinubu" as the **Complement** (direct object), and "on subsidy removal" as a **Circumstantial Adjunct**, representing a **material process** where *Atiku* is the **Actor**, *Tinubu* the **Goal**, and the policy criticized is the **Matter**. The mood type in both clauses is **declarative**, serving an **interpersonal function** of informing the reader of Atiku's critical stance, typical of news headlines that assert rather than inquire or command. Textually, the first clause has an **unmarked Theme** ("Atiku") followed by the Rheme (the caution), while the second clause has a **marked Theme** ("faults Tinubu") due to the subject ellipsis and verb-first structure, with the Rheme being "on subsidy removal." Together, the clause ideationally presents political critique and accountability, interpersonally expresses judgment, and textually foregrounds Atiku's actions for emphasis.

Text 4: Food sellers groan as subsidy removal slows business

Clause Structure	**Subject (S)**	**Predicator (P)**	**Subject (S)**	**Predicator (P)**	**Complement (C)**
	Food sellers	Groan	as subsidy removal	slows	business
Transitivity (Ideational)	Senser	Process (mental)	Actor	Process (material)	Goal
Mood Type (Interpersonal)	Declarative				
Theme/Rheme (Textual)	Unmarked (Theme)	Rheme			

Effect: The clause "Food sellers groan as subsidy removal slows business" is a complex declarative sentence consisting of a main and a subordinate clause. Structurally, the main clause "Food sellers groan" contains the subject "food sellers" and the predicator "groan," indicating a mental process where the sellers (senser) express an emotional reaction. The subordinate clause "as subsidy removal slows business" features the subject "subsidy removal," the predicator "slows," and the complement "business," representing a material process where "subsidy removal" (actor) affects "business" (goal). Ideationally, the sentence connects an emotional response (mental process) to a causal economic action (material process), showing how policy change impacts livelihoods. The mood is declarative, serving an interpersonal function of presenting information in an objective, report-like manner. Textually, the theme in the main clause is "food sellers" (unmarked), and the rheme is "groan," while the subordinate clause presents "as subsidy removal" as the theme and "slows business" as the rheme, creating a coherent flow from reaction to cause.

Text 5:

Tinubu to decide subsidy removal date after inauguration

	Tinubu	**to decide**	**subsidy removal date**	**after inauguration**
Clause Structure	Subject(S)	Predicator(P)	Complement(C)	Adjunct(A)
Transitivity (Ideational)	Actor	Process (material)	Goal	-
Mood Type (Interpersonal)	Declarative			
Theme/Rheme (Textual)	Unmarked (Theme)	Rheme		

Effect: The clause *"Tinubu to decide subsidy removal date after inauguration"* is a declarative statement structured with "Tinubu" as the Subject, "to decide" as the Predicator, "subsidy removal date" as the Complement (direct object), and "after inauguration" as a temporal Adjunct. It represents a **Material process** in transitivity, where *Tinubu* functions as the **Actor** performing the action of deciding, and *subsidy removal date* is the **Goal**, the entity affected by the action. Ideationally, the clause constructs meaning by highlighting Tinubu's agency and control over a key policy action. Interpersonally, the declarative mood indicates the speaker's intention to inform the audience about a factual or official plan, without requesting or commanding. Textually, the Theme is an **unmarked Theme** that sets up the topic, while "after inauguration" is the **Rheme**, providing new, time-bound information about when the decision will occur.

Stylistic Analysis of Five Selected News Headlines

Graphological Features

Capitalization of Acronym and Abbreviations

Capitalization of acronyms and abbreviations follows standardized conventions in which all letters are typically written in uppercase to distinguish them from regular words and to signal that they represent a condensed form of longer terms. This practice ensures clarity, consistency, and ease of recognition in both formal and informal writing. The use of capital letters in acronyms and abbreviations helps maintain uniformity across various disciplines and documents, reinforcing their function as recognizable representations for full phrases or titles.

Text 1: Subsidy removal: Pressure FG to revitalize Nigerian refineries, Group tasks NLC, TUC
Text 2: Fuel subsidy removal. Nigerians are suffering, NUJ tells FG
Text 3: Fuel subsidy removal: Nigerians are dying, CSO tells Tinubu
Text 4: Subsidy: "We are saying enough', NLC protest rocks Osun, Lagos, Abuja, Kano
Text 5: WEEK BRIEF: Tinubu Presidency, fuel subsidy saga and NLC war drums

Use of Punctuation marks

Full Stop/ Period (.)

A full stop, also known as a period, is a punctuation mark used to indicate the end of a declarative sentence or a complete thought. It signals a strong pause and helps to separate distinct statements, contributing to the clarity and structure of writing. Proper use of full stops enhances readability and ensures that written communication is clear and grammatically correct.

Text 1: Fuel subsidy removal. Nigerians are suffering, NUJ tells FG

Effect: As it can be seen, full stop is used sparingly in the newspapers headlines. The absence of full stops in newspaper headlines contributes to their sharp, urgent tone, aligning with the goal of quickly grabbing a reader's attention. Headlines are crafted to be concise and impactful, often omitting full stops to maintain a streamlined, fluid structure that emphasizes speed and immediacy. This style mirrors spoken language, creating a sense of real-time reporting and allowing readers to scan headlines rapidly without being interrupted by formal punctuation. In essence, omitting full stops helps prioritize clarity and engagement over grammatical completeness.

Moreover, the lack of full stops reflects a stylistic convention in journalism where headlines are treated more like labels or summaries than full sentences. This approach emphasizes the most critical elements like subjects, actions, and outcomesin traditional sentence structure. It also allows room for longer headlines to pack in more information without seeming cluttered. While this may occasionally cause slight ambiguity, the journalistic context and familiarity with headline syntax typically ensure the meaning remains clear to readers.

Comma (,):

A comma is a punctuation mark used to indicate a brief pause in a sentence, helping to clarify meaning and improve readability. It is used to separate items in a list, set off introductory elements, join independent clauses with coordinating conjunctions, and enclose non-essential information. Commas also appear in dates, addresses, numbers, and direct addresses. By signaling natural pauses and dividing sentence elements, commas help prevent confusion and ensure that writing flows smoothly and clearly.

Text 1: Subsidy removal: Residents groan as fuel price soars, long queues persist in C'River
Text 2: Subsidy removal: Pressure FG to revitalize Nigerian refineries, Group tasks NLC, TUC
Text 3: Fuel subsidy removal. Nigerians are suffering, NUJ tells FG
Text 4: Fuel subsidy removal: Nigerians are dying, CSO tells Tinubu
Text 5: Subsidy: "We are saying enough', NLC protest rocks Osun, Lagos, Abuja, Kano

Colon(:)

A colon is a punctuation mark used to introduce information that elaborates, explains, or lists details related to the preceding clause. It typically follows an independent clause and is used to present items in a list, quotations, definitions, or further explanation. The colon signals that what comes next is directly connected to what was just stated.

Text 1: Subsidy removal: Residents groan as fuel price soars, long queues persist in C'River
Text 2: Subsidy removal: Pressure FG to revitalise Nigerian refineries, Group tasks NLC, TUC
Text 3: Fuel subsidy removal: Nigerians are dying, CSO tells Tinubu
Text 4: Subsidy: "We are saying enough', NLC protest rocks Osun, Lagos, Abuja, Kano
Text 5: WEEK BRIEF: Tinubu Presidency, fuel subsidy saga and NLC war drums
Text 1: Subsidy removal: Residents groan as fuel price soars, long queues persist in C'River

Effect: The use of punctuation in the headlines significantly shapes their communicative clarity, stylistic effectiveness, and rhetorical force. Among the most prominent punctuation marks employed is the colon (:), which serves a critical grammatical and stylistic function. In journalistic discourse, the colon is often used to introduce elaborations, explanations, or direct consequences of a preceding phrase. In these headlines, the colon frequently appears after generalized introductory phrases such as "Subsidy removal" or "Fuel subsidy removal," thereby segmenting the headline into two structurally and semantically distinct parts. This strategic deployment enhances readability and foregrounds the newsworthy detail or evaluative stance that follows, aiding in quick information processing which is a key feature of headline writing. It also provides a visual cue to the reader, directing attention from the general theme to the specific content, thus ensuring coherence and thematic focus.

Commas (,) are used to perform multiple syntactic and rhetorical functions. In several of the headlines, commas act as linking devices that join coordinate or closely related clauses, thereby avoiding sentence fragmentation while maintaining headline brevity. For instance, in the headline "Subsidy removal: Residents groan as fuel price soars, long queues persist in C'River," the comma connects two parallel effects of the same event, creating a cumulative structure that amplifies the impact of the reported phenomenon. Additionally, commas assist in pacing and intonation, subtly guiding the reader's cognitive and emotional engagement with the text. This rhythmic function mirrors natural speech patterns and reinforces the journalistic aim of accessibility and immediacy, particularly in emotionally charged or socially significant contexts.

The apostrophe (') and the full stop (.) also play notable but more selective roles. Apostrophes are mainly used for contractions and possessives, enabling headlines to retain a conversational tone while adhering to spatial constraints. This informal register can enhance relatability and immediacy, as seen in headlines such as "We are saying enough'" which captures a direct and emotive expression. The full stop, although generally uncommon in headline writing due to its implication of finality, appears in at least one instance ("Fuel subsidy removal. Nigerians are suffering, NUJ tells FG") to create a sharp, disjunctive structure. This use of the full stop creates a deliberate pause, isolating the main clause to heighten its dramatic and rhetorical weight. Collectively, these punctuation choices reflect both the formal demands of news reporting and the expressive needs of public discourse, particularly in contexts of national urgency and socio-political tension.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study has examined the stylistic and linguistic features of selected newspaper headlines on fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria, revealing how language functions as a powerful tool in shaping public discourse. Drawing on the frameworks of Stylistic Pluralism and Systemic Functional Linguistics, the analysis uncovered a range of linguistic strategies such as ellipsis a syntactic variation used to organize information, and influence readers' perceptions. The study demonstrated that these features are not arbitrary but are consciously employed to construct ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings that align with the socio-political contexts in which the headlines are produced. It further established that language choices in headlines affect how different social groups and interests are represented, often privileging elite voices while simplifying or dramatizing the experiences of the masses. Ultimately, the findings affirm that media headlines are not just summaries of events but are rhetorically crafted instruments that shape, frame, and reinforce public understanding and opinion on national issues like fuel subsidy removal.

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