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Gender Representation in Conflict Reporting: A Linguistic Analysis of *Cameroon Tribune, The Post and The Guardian Post* Newspapers

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Abstract: *This research investigates public and private newspaper articles on gender representation in reporting the Anglophone crisis. The aim was to find out the lexical and syntactic choices that reporters adopt in reporting the crisis, and how these words and expressions portray gender in covering the conflict. Data for this study was drawn from 30 newspaper editions and from the 30 editions, 48 articles were analysed. The units of analyses were nominalisations; tones and passivation. These lexical and syntactical choices form the corpus for this study and were explained using Critical Discourse Analysis theory. The results of this research reveal that both male and female journalists use nominalisations in a way to background perpetrators of action and to focus on the action. That, male reporters use nominalisations to background males who commit crimes but project women who commit crimes using their names. The results equally reveal that male reporters in the selected newspapers construct sentences more in the passive voice while the female reporters construct sentences more in the active voice. It was therefore, concluded that women are misrepresented in news reports, even in matters of violence, abuse, brutality, rape and death. However,*



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

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February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

presenting women in the passive sentences hinders perpetrators of violence against women from being traced. It is therefore, recommended that reporters, when reporting sociopolitical crisis, should strive to be objective in representing gender and should report in a way to enhance gender balance rather than gender misrepresentation.

Keywords: Representation, gender, nominalization, tones, passive voice

1. Introduction

An important way of examining the representation of social actors in newspaper texts is through the linguistic resources. The gendered dimension of representation is evident regarding the actors because the represented and the representatives by definition have sex and gender (Machin et al, 2016). However, gender representation is not only concerned with the sex of the actors but also focuses on what is represented and the reason(s) why it is represented using a gender lens (Machin et al, 2016). As pointed out by Fairclough (1995), the text plays an important role in representing social actors and in defining their identities and relations. Representing social actors in a text therefore means portraying their political, economic, social, cultural and linguistic characteristics. This study is an attempt to investigate the portrayal of men and women in news of the Anglophone crisis in *Cameroon Tribune*, *The Guardian Post* and *Post* newspapers. It aims at investigating the language that newspaper reporters use in representing men and women in their reports of the crisis. More specifically, this research focuses on answering the research question “what are the lexical and syntactical choices that newspaper reporters adopt when representing gender in their reports on the Anglophone crisis?” Since the media play very significant roles in shaping public perceptions about men and women; it is therefore, important to carefully examine the concepts of gender representation, gender and conflict reporting and language in reporting the Anglophone crisis which entails more especially tones in newspaper headlines, nominalisations and passivation in news articles of the Anglophone crisis in newspapers. The next section presents a background to this study.

2. Background to the study

Gender representation is a major preoccupation in the world, in that governments try to



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

foster equal gender representation in almost all sectors of activities. Considering equality in gender representation in the media, in education, in politics, in economic activities of the nation and in peace processes in the world as an important feature; global organisations have embarked at fostering equality in gender representation and the successful integration of women in almost all sectors of activities. For example, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) put forth great effort in promoting gender equality and reducing gender biased contents. One of the organisations' stated goals by 2015 was to eliminate gender disparity in all levels of education (Blumberg, 2007). In addition, the Commonwealth Secretariat embarked on achieving their main aim through gender equality where it issued a document called Gender Equality Policy which seeks "to strengthen the policy and operational framework of the Commonwealth Secretariat to promote gender equality and mainstreaming in its internal systems and processes as well as programmes of assistance" (Commonwealth Secretariat Programme, 2012: 12).

Cameroon in line with these international organisations, conventions and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) has ratified many laws and constitutions to enhance the promotion of gender equality and equal representation of men and women according to the resources and opportunities available in the country. For example, in Cameroon, the following policies among others have been endorsed:

1. Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
2. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
3. Resolution 1325 of the United Nations on Women's Participation in Peace management and Conflict Resolution;
4. Declaration of African Union Heads of States on equality between men and women;

In addition to the above laws and the BPFA on the promotion of gender equality, Cameroon has also endorsed the policy declaration on the Integration of Women in Development. The Multi-sectorial Plan of Action on Women and Development; and the National Plan of Action on the Integration of Women in Development were drafted and approved in 1997 and adopted by the Government in 1999. Even the Constitution of Cameroon encourages gender



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

balance in all areas but there are still many obstacles to attaining gender equity in Cameroon (MINPROFF: Report of the Republic of Cameroon under the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 2019). That is to say, even though laws have been promulgated to enhance equal gender representations, a lot still needs to be done.

3. Gender representation

As already indicated above, gender is a social construct and it is defined in relationship with differences between the sexes. The constructions of gender are believed to be ideological and can be shown to be constructed in language, other forms of representation, in social practices and institutions (Machin et al, 2016). According to Shaw (2010) there are two main arguments for the importance of representation: First, people desire to see people like them. On the other hand, if those people do not buy that particular genre or medium, it means care was not taken to represent them unless one is just being a good person putting good things into the world (Shaw, 2010). Representation in this paper explains how the print media portrays both males and females in news articles of the Anglophone crisis. Media representation therefore is the varying and evolving ways in which the media depict or portray both gender in their contents (Huda and Ali, 2015). In general, media continue to present both women and men in stereotyped ways that limit our perceptions of human possibilities. Analysing gender representation reveals stereotyping ideologies related to men and women. Stereotyping may entail negative depiction in the sense that the establishing of stereotyping is associated with the dominant group in the society over the powerless one (Lakoff, 1975). Ideology on the other hand is revealed in the binary oppositions created between the two genders, the cultural stereotypes and discursive constructions in various forms of communication, both verbal and visual (Baker, 2011). In trying to investigate how gender is portrayed in texts, it is better to look at what other research works reveal.

Mansoor (2013) conducted a study on print media language and contribution to the stereotypical portrayal of Pakistani women. The result showed that there are no differences in gender portrayal of men and women in print media discourses on migration. Similarly, Fonghe



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

(2022) investigated on gender representation in migration discourses in the Cameroon print media. According to her, under/misrepresentation of women is real in the Cameroon print media at all levels of reporting and there is need for the promotion of the ideology of fairness in gender representations. Then, Ullah et al (2016) examined the representations of men and women in print media in Pakistan. Taking into consideration the importance of newspapers as the leading source of credible content/messages, their work examined gender stereotyping and sexism in print media in Pakistan and attempted to highlight whether print media reproduces or challenges gender stereotypes and sexism. The results indicated that print media in Pakistan reinforce gender stereotypes and provide little challenge to gender stereotyped imagery of males and females.

Other studies have tackled gender representation from diverse perspectives (Lee & Collins, 2009; Yang, 2011; Namatende-Sakwa, 2018). They have provided both content and linguistic analyses of written discourses and pictures. These studies include among others, investigations of gender stereotyping, male firstness, and sexist language. Common findings include the underrepresentation of females, descriptions of women and women engaged in stereotypical activities, the ordering of men before women, descriptions of men as powerful, brave and adventurous and of women as emotional weak, submissive and dependent. This study has engaged in a different direction which is the study of gender representation in conflict discourses in the print media in Cameroon.

4. Gender and Conflict Reporting

Conflict affects men and women, girls and boys in different ways. For example, direct violence during conflict tend to affect men more significantly than women, as men are called to take up arms, to become combatants or to be forced into armed groups. The fact that men form the majority of combatants means that they are more likely to be killed in combat (Raven-Roberts, 2013). He further avers that men and young boys are affected by conflict possibly through issues such as forcible mobilisation, imprisonment and injury and most of the child soldiers for example tend to be boys. However, women are more likely to be affected by the



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

indirect forms of violence. Notably, the rises of protracted intra-state wars as well as other forms of violence and insecurity have had devastating consequences for civilians and particularly women and children. Furthermore, women's socio-economic livelihoods are significantly transformed as a result of violent conflict, as they often find themselves in a vulnerable position with fewer resources to protect as a result of stripped assets and eroded livelihoods (Raven-Roberts, 2013). This implies that women are more likely to lose their earnings and to face the burden of care giving for the family as a result of conflict, which often tends to reconfigure local economies while increasing vulnerabilities.

Conflict reporting is a complex process and an essential resource for journalism and readers. It involves respecting the key standards of journalistic professionalism which impartially presents verified information in a fair and balanced context. Conflict reporting suffers from imbalances as it often focuses on specific, violent events and lacks background, contexts, and analysis Humphries (2009). The news coverage of armed conflicts is profoundly gendered and largely men-dominated (Humphries 2009). Men are asked to explain and interpret the conflict in many different roles: as combatants, warlords, experts, and politicians. Women's opinions, on the other hand, are rarely asked and if they are, it is usually from the perspective of victims (Humphries 2009). The media at this level tend to ignore the fact that women are also physically and intellectually capable, great decision-makers and individuals capable of contributing immensely to media development and conflict escalation/de-escalation. In terms of journalism practice, there are disparities between male and female journalists as they exercise their professional duties. Women are further perceived and regarded as liabilities not bold enough to withstand the rigours of reporting from the field. Making such comments about women covering conflict situations as "women cannot run", "they are frivolous" and "wear makeup and long nails" (Ugboaja 1980: 16) are the issues always thought about women. These issues and more about women's representation in conflict reporting further degrade women and issues affecting them during conflict are neglected.

In the same vein, Ross and Byerly (2008) analysed the representation of women in



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

Albanian media. The analysis was perceived in a more general context of theories and empirical evidence on representation globally. The headlines and the content of Albanian print and broadcast media documenting the news reports and news programmes were analysed to demonstrate if marginality of women in Albanian society could be spoken of. Their study revealed that in general, there is a tendency of underreporting of most crimes against women. The abuse against women is reported in the newspapers only when they are dealing with cases of rape or murder.

Considering conflict reporting from a gender representative perspective involves respecting some key journalism language standards which requires presenting information in a fair and balanced context, giving voices to the marginalised actors and avoiding gender stereotypes; where in terms of language, this involves using language that is inclusive of men and women (for example, using gender-neutral terms instead of biased ones), using adjectives that are objective and relevant instead of the ones that convey biases of stereotype; ensuring that the language used in reporting is void of discrimination and stigma; portraying women as survivors rather than as victims and as being active rather than passive; using physical description when relating to stories and apply this equally to men and women and avoiding images that degrade the dignity of women. Language has a very powerful role to play in newspaper representation of gender. It can be used to exclude women completely from news or prejudice, obscure and down look them in news texts. Therefore, the study of the language used in reporting is primordial and must be taken seriously when writing news articles.

5. Tones in Newspaper Headlines

Tone, an aspect of language is one of the underline features of news headlines in newspapers. Tone, which in framing literature is also designated as valence, may be positive, neutral or negative (Brunken, 2006). Studies have found that tone in media coverage has multiple significant effects. According to Brunken (2006), tone influences audience members to think in a certain way about a particular issue. To him, if the content of news is negatively framed, people tend to have more negative attitudes towards the topic (Brunken, 2006). If tone is applied to the



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

concept of news framing, it has been found that some frames are indicative of ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ dichotomy and implicitly carry positive or negative elements, or both (de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003). Tone in this paper helps to indicate the positive, negative or neutral linguistic elements that male and female reporters use in newspaper headlines of the Anglophone crisis that may tend to escalate or deescalate the conflict.

Kuttschreuter et al. (2011) researched on tone and state that negative tones are seen when the words that are used to describe the main subject evoke negative associations and include expletives. The main subject is exposed in a bad way. The terms include ‘worthless’, ‘spreading fear’, ‘polarising or hateful’, ‘misbehaviour’, ‘failure’, ‘ingratitude’, ‘unthankful’, ‘unsatisfied’, ‘causing troubles’ or ‘unethical’, etc. Positive tones are seen when the words that are used to describe the main subject evoke positive associations. The main subject is exposed in a good way. For example ‘honesty’, ‘satisfaction’ or ‘(suggesting) solutions’ and ‘appreciation’, ‘helping’ and the words also include expletives, for example ‘fantastic’, ‘a hero’, ‘dream chaser’ or ‘amazing’ Neutral tones are factual pieces that avoid strong wording, personal statements or anecdotes. For neutral tones, the main subject is described in an objective manner and the story is based on facts. The words used to describe the main subject evoke no specific positive or negative associations (Kuttschreuter et al., 2011).

The examination of the headlines in this paper is to find out if they have positive, negative or neutral tones. The coding is based on the language used by each newspaper. According to the coding procedure, a negative headline employs aggressive words or expressions that may cause emotion, hatred and other negative expressions associated with the conflict for example *attack*, *bloody*, *murdered*, *lamentations*, etc. The positive headlines contain peaceful or non-violent messages and hold out hope for a better situation. Such words may mitigate conflict rather than induce it. For example, “call for appeasement”, “peace agreement” and “solutions”. The neutral headlines do not contain any aggressive words but also do not contain peaceful messages; they are facts, for example “Plan Elaborated”. These linguistic features of headlines as mentioned above might not be present in all headlines of the selected newspapers of this study



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

but an attempt is made in this line to the classifications to show how newspaper headlines on the Anglophone Crisis have been produced by reporters according to gender and the newspaper brand for which they report. In this view, this paper also study nominalisations in news articles.

6. Nominalisations

Nominalisations are nouns that are derived from verbs or adjectives morphologically. The nominalisations that are derived from a verb or adjective, usually end in suffixes such as –ness, –tion, –ment, –ity, –or, –er, –ism, etc and their plural forms. For instance, the noun “reduction” is derived from the verb “reduce” and “abolition” from “abolish”. Nominalisation is one way to obfuscate agency. Nominalisation 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. In other words, nominalisation has the potential of turning actions and processes into abstract things.

Nominalisation has been described as a major feature of abstract language favoured by academic writers (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998), since it is typically used to integrate information into fewer words (Chafe, 1985). According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), nominalisation probably evolved first in scientific and technical registers, gradually spreading to other areas of adult discourse and has become a mark of prestige and power in academic discourse. Nominalisation has been singled out as one strategy used to package information in a text, and as such a generally preferred style in academic English (Grabe 1984). This study therefore endeavours to identify the nominalisation strategies that reporters use according to their gender type and how social actors are represented in nominalisation processes according to their gender type. However, it also probes into how journalists present stakeholders of the crisis through syntactic choices.

7. Syntax and Passivation

Sentence syntax expresses the semantic roles of participants in an event by word order, relational functions (subject, object), or the use of active or passive forms. A headline like “Police kills demonstrator” puts police in first, subject position and expresses that the police has agent role. In the passive sentence “Demonstrator killed by police”, the police is also an agent,



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

but in this case, the phrase referring to the demonstrator is in first, subject position, which means that police is assigned a less prominent role. Finally, the headline “Demonstrator killed” may make the role of the police implicit. At the same time, the headline becomes syntactically ambiguous: It could also be read as a description of an event in which the demonstrator was the killer or more generally associate demonstrators with killing. Grammatical research on newspaper syntax has shown that this is indeed the case: Negative roles of the elite tend to be dissimulated by this kind of syntactic downgrading and implicitness (Fowler et al 1979).

There are different degrees of presence and absence in texts. Fairclough (1995a) divides degrees of presence in the following ways: absences – presupposed – backgrounded – foregrounded. Van Leeuwen (1996) makes a distinction between suppression and backgrounding. Suppression means a given actor is not referred to anywhere in the text. Backgrounding means that the actor is not wholly excluded from the text, but “de-emphased”, kept in the background. Whether the sentence is active or passive is of importance. In the active voice, the focus is upon the subject, the doer of the action, while the passive voice focuses on the object, the target of the action. In the passive, the doer of the action is at the end of the sentence, but the agent can also be deleted. For example:

- 1) The police shot the demonstrator
- 2) A demonstrator was shot by the police
- 3) A demonstrator was shot.

In the first sentence above, the police are foregrounded. In the second, the dead demonstrator and the police are backgrounded to a less prominent sentence final position. In the third sentence, the agent is absent, so we do not know who shot the demonstrator. The passive makes it possible to move the subject to the background or delete it altogether. Passive agent deletion enables one to make agency unclear.

8. Theoretical Frame

This research is couched in the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) frame. Critical discourse analysis is a field of study which has been known as a powerful tool to analyse all sort



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

of power in language. This power is always there, sometimes “activated to produce change” or being able to be “responsible” for it (Fairclough, 2010: 204-205) which can then give meaning to ideology. Within these principles and aims, CDA is used in this paper to investigate the language used in representing gender in public and private newspapers reporting on the Anglophone crisis from 2017-2021. It highlights the linguistic features and discourse practices adopted by news producers in their representation of the gender of social actors.

The representation of gender in newspaper issues in this article is mirrored from van Leeuwen (2008) theory of CDA. Gender representatives here are also social actors and according to Coesemans (2013), the representation of social actors in a text is not arbitrary or trivial. It contributes to the creation of a frame of interpretation. This is important because it helps in the search for patterns of unquestioned meaning and ideological aspects of news discourse. Fowler (1991) observes that representation always comes from a specific ideological point of view. For example, when social actors are excluded in news reports, it may be for strategic reasons or it may be assumed that readers are already familiar with such details or that such details are irrelevant. The same opinion is held by Sahragard (2010: 76) that some exclusion may be innocent, details which readers assume to know already or which are deemed irrelevant to them; others impose certain ideologies on the reader. In a similar perspective, social actors can be utilised for the purposes of being an instigator of action, an agent of action, a beneficiary of action or one affected by action (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 7). In case of exclusion, the actors are either *suppressed* which makes them totally absent from the news reports or they are *backgrounded*, that is they are not mentioned but could be inferred as a result of the shared background knowledge.

CDA is therefore a method and theory used in this work to examine the representation of social actors (male and female) in the discourses of three broadly read newspapers (*Cameroon Tribune, The Post* and *The guardian Post*) in the coverage of the Anglophone Crisis from 2017–2021. The following section presents the methodology of this study.

9. Methodology



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

Data for this paper was collected through tallying newspaper contents for the language choices adopted by reporters. The content analyses of newspapers enabled the researcher to examine the lexical choices that reporters use when talking about male or female stakeholders of the crisis. This exercise was also geared at examining the language choices that male and female adopt when reporting, which may be causing the crisis to escalate or which may be helping to mitigate the conflict. During the newspaper exploration phase, the researcher purposefully selected newspapers articles on the Anglophone crisis from *Cameroon Tribune*, *The guardian Post* and *The Post* newspapers published between 2017 and 2021. The selection of newspaper articles was guided by gendered words like “man”, “woman”, “girl”, “boy”, “female”, “mother”, “queen mother”, “bishop”, etc. Although newspaper articles on the Anglophone crisis published by male and female reporters were important for this study, those published by female reporters were also importantly considered for this study since they were few. In this light, some 30 newspaper editions were considered and from the 30 editions, 48 articles were analysed. The units of analyses were nominalisations; tones and passivation. These lexical and syntactical choices form the corpus for this study and were explained using Critical Discourse Analysis theory.

10. Nominalisations in Reporting the Anglophone Crisis

The nominalisations that are derived from verbs or adjectives, usually end in suffixes such as –ness, -tion, -ment, -ity, -or, -er, -ism, etc. Their realisations in news text function to background or foregrounds actors of events or to render nouns to abstract ideas. For example

- 1)but the Divisional Delegate held that even if the women had no trafficking **intentions**, it was very wrong for them to have engaged in such a move in **violation** of the law (*The Post*, Friday, March 05, 2021, pg 7 by a male reporter)
- 2) Their **presentation** to the national media, a release from the Ministry of Defence states, aimed at reassuring national and international opinion on the **determination** of the defence and security forces to repress criminal gangs...(*CT*, Monday, July 13, 2020, pg 2 by a female reporter)



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

- 3) *he told the Post on Tuesday, while in **detention** that he was the one who requested and got one child.....another woman, **detained**, Vivian Njanu, said she gave one of the two women FCFA 10,000 to look for one of the children in their village...(The Post, Friday, March 05, 2021, pg 7 by a male reporter)*
- 4) *The Governor was the bearer of a message of hope from the Presidential couple with FCFA 80 million to help **survivors** in the reconstruction of homes, crops and animals that suffered massive destruction during the incident...(CT, Friday February 05, 2021, pg 7 by a male reporter)*

The excerpts above show that both male and female journalists use nouns in a way to background perpetrators of action but to focus on the action. Excerpt 2 functions to background those presented and their presenter(s) to the national media. But the purpose to which they have been presented is highlighted and this shows that the action is to project the determination of the defence and security forces to repress criminal gangs. This implies that if criminals of the crisis are always presented in the media, it may repress or mitigate some of the untold atrocities they commit.

The term “detention” as used in excerpt 3 above shows that the person in detentions is a man. This is seen through the use of the pronoun “he” to refer to the person in detention. But as the excerpt continues, we realise that a woman is also in detention for the same crime and is being revealed as “Vivian Njanu”. She is seen through her name but the man’s name is not given and the reporter presents the woman in the passive form of action. The woman is presented as being “detained” while the man is in “detention”. We can therefore, say that male reporters use nominalisations to background males who commit crimes but project women who commit crimes using their names. On the other hand, male reporters project male social actors who have done positive thing as demonstrated in excerpt 4 above. The governor is foregrounded as the bearer of a message of hope from the Presidential couple with FCFA 80 million to help survivors in the reconstruction of homes, crops and animals that suffered massive destruction during the incident. Who the “survivors” are, is unknown and this is intended as such to focus on “the Governor” rather than on the survivors.



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

Nominalisation 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 (Grabe, 1984). It also has the potential of making actions and processes into abstract things. For example,

- 1) 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 by a male reporeter)
- 2) Since **the arrest, repatriation and handingover** of the people, many questions are being asked on the legality and judicial of the decision by the Nigerian government....(CT, Thursday, February 01, 2018, pg 2 by a male reporter)
- 3) The chief acknowledge his **awareness** of the situation and pleaded that the two women were his subjects (*The Post*, Friday, March 05, 2021 by a male reporter)

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, 1985). **Arrest** and **repatriate** are verbs but are used as noun in excerpt 2 above. The use of these verbs as nouns transforms actions and processes into abstract things. In presenting “arrest” as such, the writer tries to formalise the arrest. **Repatriation** 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 **repatriation**. The chief in excerpt 3 above is conscious of everything and is presented as someone who protects his subjects. This shows that men are represented as those who protect women during the Anglophone crisis.

Nouns, especially nouns from the process of nominalization as we have observed above, have their parts to play in representing gender. Fairclough (1995a, 46) puts it that the notion of ideology suggests distortion and manipulation of the truth in pursuit of specific interests. This



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

implies that, trying to obscure the agent of an action is purely ideological and the writer’s/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 nouns formed from the process of nominalisation as pointed above function to background the social actor, to pass the message across in fewer words and to make actions and processes into abstract things.

10. Tones in Newspaper Headlines of the Anglophone Crisis

As indicated in subheading 5 above, tone in combination with other grammatical elements and words, may be positive, neutral or negative (Brunken, 2006). In trying to examine how gender is represented using tones in newspaper headlines, this section analyses the different tones used in newspaper headlines and these tones are classified according to the gender of the reporter, newspaper genre and positive, negative and neutral tones.

Table 1 Tone use in Newspapers Headlines

Newspapers	Cameroon Tribune				The Guardian Post				The Post			
	Male reporter		Female reporter		Male reporter		Female reporter		Male reporter		Female reporter	
Tones	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	26	36.11	7	41.18	21	26.93	16	64	25	28.40	2	18.18
Negative	40	55.56	4	23.53	46	58.97	6	24	43	48.87	5	45.45
Neutral	6	8.33	6	35.29	11	14.10	3	12	20	22.73	4	36.36
Total	72	100	17	100	78	100	25	100	88	100	11	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

From table 8 above, when we sum up male and female frequencies, we realise that



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

Cameroon Tribune has 33 positive, 44 negative and 12 neutral tones respectively. Similarly, *The Guardian Post* totals 37 positive, 51 negative and 14 neutral tones. Meanwhile, *The Post* totals 27 positive, 48 negative and 24 neutral tones. These tones as presented in table 1 are illustrated according to the male and female reporters who produce them. The analyses indicate that female reporters in *Cameroon Tribune* use more positive and neutral tones in reporting the crisis while their male colleagues use more negative tones. In *The Guardian Post*, the female also use more negative tones but concentrate more on the neutral tones. *The Post* then presents that female reporters use more negative and neutral tones but their male colleagues use more negative tones. Here below are examples of tones in the selected newspapers.

Positive tones

- *South West: Generalised Harmony is back (CT, Friday October 06 2017, p2)*
- *Solution to Anglophone Crisis is Pacified, Open, Visible Dialogue (The Post, Friday, July 16, 2018, p2)*
- *Anglophone crisis: Affected Many population awaits distribution of humanitarian aids (TGP, November 17, 2020, pg6 by a male reporter)*

Negative tones

- *Mamfe gendarmerie barracks attacks: Defence forces shoot dead five terrorist (CT, Monday December 11 2017, p9 by a male reporter)*
- *Kumba school massacre: Bamenda women condemn, urge Biya to end crisis in NW, SW (TGP, Wednesday, October 28, 2020 p2 by 2 female reporters)*

Neutral tones

- *Government's response Plan Elaborated (Cameroon Tribune, Monday, December 04, 2017, p3 by a male reporter)*
- *The Anglophone problem can be resolved without picking up arms (The Post, Monday, May 23, 2016, p5 by a male reporter)*

One of the objectives of this study is to ascertain how male and female reporters use language in a way that can differentiate male reporters from the female ones. It also seeks to analyse gender representation in the selected newspapers. To proceed in this light, the study looks into tones in headlines. The article “Mamfe gendarmerie barracks attacks: Defence forces



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

shoot dead five terrorist” (CT, Monday December 11 2017, pg9) shows negative tone in that the Defence forces averted a “terrorist” attack that would have destroyed many people. This story, being on the side of the Defence Forces would have been positive, owing to the fact that their mission is to neutralise all terrorists’ attacks but on the part of the Ambazonia Defence Forces, the story is negative as the claim to be defending the interest of all Anglophone citizens irrespective of their status. The minimal way that could mitigate the conflict would have been to use the neutral tone. Therefore “Mamfe gendarmerie barracks attacks: Defence forces shoot dead five terrorist” could be written thus:

Mamfe gendarmerie pushes back: Defence forces neutralized five assailants. Or

Loyalist forces in Mamferestore security: Five people neutralized.

A positive tone like the one in the excerpt “Thousands of women from different walks of life in Bamenda, North West Region have urged the Head of State, President Paul Biya to put an end to the crisis in the North West and South West regions”(Wednesday, October 28, 2020, p2 by two female reporters) enhances hope. These women are in their thousands from different walks of life to constitute another group of women to urge President Paul Biya to put an end to the crisis, meaning that women act in groups. They are also presented as protesters when the report says, “this was during a protest march to condemn the Saturday October 24 massacre of school children in kumba...”(TGP, Wednesday, October 28, 2020, p2 by two female reporters). Female reporters use negative tones in a positive way to condemn atrocities committed during the crisis. The two female reporters present a demonstration by women against the killing of children in school in Kumba. Furthermore, the different ways by which male and female reporters present situations and how men and women social actors of the Anglophone crisis are presented is elaborated in the way reporters use reporting verbs while reporting.

11. Syntactic Choices and Passivation

Some 30 texts were selected from CT, TGP and TP to analyse the use of passive and active sentence constructions of the writers. Accordingly, 8 articles reported by males and 2



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

reported by females are selected from the *Cameroon Tribune* newspaper. Equally, 8 articles reported by the males and 2 by the females as well selected from *The guardian Post* newspaper and the same thing is done with *The Post* newspaper. The total number of articles to be analysed in this light are 30 and the result presented below.

Table 1 Number of active and passive sentences according to gender

Newspapers	<i>Cameroon Tribune</i>				<i>The Guardian Post</i>				<i>The Post</i>			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
Sex of the reporter												
Sentences	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
	Active	23	33.82	19	40.43	18	36	16	69.56	11	29.72	7
Passive	45	66.18	28	59.47	32	64	7	30.44	26	70.28	15	68.19
Total	68	100	47	100	50	100	23	100	37	100	22	100

Source: field work 2022

Table 10 presents the number of active and passive sentence constructions realised by male and female reporters from some 30 newspaper articles – 10 from *Cameroon Tribune*, 10 from *The Guardian Post* and 10 from *The Post*. Accordingly, 23 sentences constituting 33.82%



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

of the active sentences from the *Cameroon Tribune* are realised by male reporters while their female colleagues realise 19 sentences constituting 40.43% of active sentences. For the passive sentences, the male reporters in CT realise 45 sentences constituting 66.18% while the female reporters of this same paper realise 28 passive sentences constituting 59.47%. Therefore, in *Cameroon Tribune* male reporters construct more active and passive sentences than their female counterparts. From *The Guardian Post* newspapers, male reporters realise 18 sentences in the active voice constituting 36% while their female colleagues realise 16 active sentences representing 69.56%. For the passive sentences, the male reporters in TGP realise 32 passive sentences constituting 64% while the female reporters of this same paper realise 7 passive sentences representing 30.44%. The results from the Post newspapers show that the male reporters construct passive sentences at 70.28% and active ones at 29.72% while their female colleagues construct passive sentences (68.19%) and the active ones (31.81%). Generally and without comparing male and female reporters in sentence construction, one realises that male reporters in the selected newspapers of this study construct sentences more in the passive voice while the female reporters construct sentences more in the active voice.

11.1 Active Sentence Constructions

Active sentences consist of sentences where the subject occupies the first position in the sentence, the doer of action in the sentence and this action is directed to the object which comes after the main verb of the sentence. While the subject is known as the doer of action, the object is the receiver of the action performed by the subject. Here below are examples of active sentences extracted from newspaper articles as indicated above on the Anglophone crisis.

- 1) *South West Governor, Bernard Okalia Bilai decorated the fallen gendarmerie officer with the Medal of Bravery ...*(CT, Monday, January 22, 2018 pg3 by a male reporter
- 2) *Following the attack on a vehicle of the National Police at Eyumojock Subdivision in the Manyu Division of the South West region on June 15, 2019 by supposed separatist fighters, the delegate general for National Security, Martin Mbarga Nguete on June 18, 2019 visited the wounded*



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

officers who are in Yaounde on the instruction of the Head of State for adequate medical care (CT, Wednesday, June 19, 2019, pg 04 by a female reporter).

Action in the above excerpts is performed by South West Governor, Bernard Okalia Bilai and the delegate general for National Security, Martin Mbarga Nguete. Writing sentences in the active voice means giving more importance to the person performing the action in the sentence than the action. The subject is always in the first position of the sentence. In news reporting, the reporter in placing the actor of the sentence in the first position avers to make the subject prominent.

Most sentences with male actors presented by female reporters are in the active voice. For example, in the article in *The Post* newspaper written by a male and female reporter, one can see almost all the sentences in the active form like:

...the chiefs demanded that the Government must among other things begin “the immediate construction of the Limbe Deep Sea-port”.... senator Matute, during the Limbe gathering urged everyone to be as frank, open and fearless as possible in..... they observed that many Government officials who have come for the same mission in the past have ended up not conveying exactly The chiefs called for a full implementation of the 1996 Constitution as one of the ways to resolve the crisis... (TP, Friday, October 20, 2017, pg 2, reported by two female journalists on internship)

Those executing the actions in the above sentences are males. Although actions in active sentences are usually caused by an animate person to a person or an object, in reporting conflicts, we also realise that inanimate objects perform actions on people and abstract nouns as well. For example “...an unidentified woman on a commercial bike **was also shot by a stray bullet**... (CT, Friday, November 10, 2017, pg2 by a male reporter) and “**Anglophone Crisis is devouring** our people, killing our economy... (TP, Monday, March 26, 2019, pg5 by a male reporter), the sentences can be re-written as thus:

1) *A stray bullet shot an unidentified woman on a commercial bike.*



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

2) *Our people are being devoured by the Anglophone crisis*

3) *Our economy is being killed by the Anglophone crisis*

Sentence one is in the active voice, showing that a bullet which is an inanimate object shot a woman who is animate. The fact is that, a person shot the bullet, may be in the air or directed to another person. But since it is not known who shot the bullet, reporters use the adjective “stray” to mean that the bullet was not directed to the woman who is also identified in the report as “an unidentified woman”. Though the sentence is an active one, we realise that the actor of the sentence is backgrounded and the object as well is backgrounded. What can be retained from the sentence is the action through the verb “shot”. The two other sentences are in the passive voice, where the perpetrator of action is “Anglophone crisis” devouring and killing people and the economy. It indicates that male reporters use language in a way to demonstrate that inanimate objects and abstract nouns perform actions in sentences relating to the Anglophone crisis.

11.2 Passive Constructions

The passive sentences considered in this section are the sentences written by the news reporter with the structure of [verb to be in the present or past tense + principal verb in the past participle form]. The forms of passive sentences that are not considered are [verb to be in the present or past tense + principal verb in the past participle form + “by”]. “By” in the passive sentence is used to introduce the person doing the action in the sentence and this is done at the end of the sentence. This form of passive construction can easily be used to identify the doer of action in the sentence when it is transformed into the active sentence. But the idea in this section is to identify those sentences where the actor of action is completely backgrounded. Here below are examples of sentences considered for the sample.

1) *The security officers, Hinma Rene, Djonlay Bienvenu, Sali David and Yaya **were posthumously decorated** for supreme sacrifices (CT, Monday, November 20, 2017, pg2).*

2) *A source that confided in The Post but refused to be named for fear of reprisal, said that the patients who **were abducted** from the hospital were from Bangem where a serious military*



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

confrontation had ensued between the Military and Ambazonian elements fighting for independence... (T P, Monday 02, 2018, pg 02)

- 3) *A source in the village who did not want to be named, narrating the incident said “the man **was asked** to present his ID card but he said he did not have one” (TGP, Thursday February 10, 2021, pg 5)*

Who abducted the patients is not mentioned but the action of “abduction” is projected. It may also be the ideology of the reporter to hide the perpetrators of the action. It is realised that many male reporters hide the actors of action in their news articles. It can be said that reporters background the person doing the action in the sentence for ideological purposes (Fairclough, 1995a). Furthermore, the person who decorated the fallen soldier in sentence one is backgrounded and the action is foregrounded. According to the writer, it is not important who does the action but what the action is will attract readership of the newspaper (Leewen 1996). It is possible too that since it is the male reporter reporting these incidents of shooting a man by a fellow man and killing civilians and security forces, he may decide to hide the person/people and project the action. Meanwhile, this has revealed that male reporters use more passive sentences when reporting than female reporters.

Presenting women in the passive sentences hinders the tracing of perpetrators of violence against women. The excerpts below blur who really are the killers of the young girl displaced by the Anglophone crisis.

- 1) *Hundreds of mourners have demanded justice for 23-year –old Ngafi Faith who **was recently raped and killed** in her room in Bafoussam of the West region.*
- 2) *It should be recalled that, Ngafi **was found** naked in her room with stabbed wounds on her body. The walls of her room **were also stained** with blood...*
- 3) *.... the Bafoussam police had declared that she **was stabbed** after haven been rapped by attackers....*

The expressions *was recently raped and killed, was found naked, were also stained and*



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

was stabbed after haven been rapped are all in the passive voice. They function to background the actor of these acts of “rape”, and “killing”. The actor, seen as “attacker” in excerpt 3 is normalised and this blurs the attackers even though they are introducing with the word “by” at the end of the sentence. All these may be seen as the misrepresentation of women even in matters of violence, abuse, brutality, rape and even death concerning them that could be highly articulated by the media. Writing sentences in the passive voice can make a double hide of actors of the action in the sentence. For example in the extract

- 1) *... the Limbe Magistrate Court on Friday March 5, 2021 began preliminary trial to determine whether some two women namely Ms Mokube Sharlotte Botech and Mbotake Vivian Ndialle and five accomplices who are presently being accused of having marketed some 26 children from Ndian to Limbe are liable to answer these charges in an open Court...(CT, Friday, March 12, 2021, pg 17)*
- 2) *Mark Baretta’s mother was arrested and detained into custody at the police headquarters in Buea on Tuesday, April 24, to produce her son, who is advocating for the reinstatement of the state of West Cameroon...” (The Post, Monday, April 27, 2018, p5)*

The one who has accused the two women and five accomplices is not mentioned and the “accomplices” have also been hidden and Coesemans (2013) avers that the representation of social actors in a text is not arbitrary or trivial. Fowler (1991) affirms by reiterating that representation always comes from a specific ideological point of view. The analysis may hold that the person who accused the two women in excerpt one is a female actor who has higher social and political qualifications and the “five accomplices” may be men who are at the background but instigating the women to carry out acts of trafficking. In excerpt two the person who arrested Mark Baretta’s mother is not mentioned and it may be according to the reasons already illustrated above by Fairclough 1995 and Leeuwen 1996. This portrays women as victims of crimes committed by men. This goes on to reveal that, women in higher social and



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

political positions in the press are backgrounded while women who commit crimes are foregrounded. On the other hand, men in higher social and political positions are foregrounded meanwhile men who commit crimes are backgrounded.

12. Summary of Results

Nominalisations function in diverse ways when reporting conflicts. The results of this research show that both male and female journalists use nominalisations in a way to background perpetrators of action and to focus on the action. Nominalisation processes in this study are revealed as a special technique to integrate information into fewer words. Unlike male reporters who background people in nominalisations to reduce incidents that may provoke upheaval relating to the escalate the conflict, female reporters background action in nominalisation processes to highlight and project the determination of the defence and security forces to repress criminal gangs during the crisis. The results equally reveal that male reporters use nominalisations to background males who commit crimes but project women who commit crimes using their names.

Writing sentences in the passive voice may make a double hide of actors of the action in the sentence. Generally, male reporters in the selected newspapers of this study construct sentences more in the passive voice while the female reporters construct sentences more in the active voice. It was discovered that women in higher social and political positions in the press are backgrounded while women who commit crimes are foregrounded in news reports using their names. On the other hand, men in higher social and political positions are foregrounded meanwhile men who commit crimes are backgrounded in news reports. All these are seen as the misrepresentation of women even in matters of violence, abuse, brutality, rape and even death concerning them, could have been highly articulated by the media. However, presenting women in the passive sentences hinders perpetrators of violence against women from being traced.

13. Discussion of the Findings

Gender representation in conflict reporting is the act of giving a detailed account of the conflict situations through words, expressions, phrases, clauses, sentences, texts, photographs



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

and concepts adopted by journalists using a gender lens. Fowler (1991: 121) argues that in newspapers, the common ways of representing gender are through written words. To ascertain the lexical and syntactic choices made by reporters to represent gender in newspaper articles on the Anglophone crisis, the choice of words and manner of representation are primordial. In Fowler's (1987: 69) view, how things are said is as important as what things are said, as ideology is continuously expressed in elements of linguistic structure.

Reports show that male reporters use nominalisations processes like **detention** and **violation** to background males who commit crimes but project women who commit crimes using their names. On the other hand, male reporters project male social actors who have done positive things. For example **the Governor is foregrounded** as the bearer of a message of hope from the Presidential couple with FCFA 80 million to help **survivors** in the reconstruction of homes, crops and animals that suffered massive destruction in an incident during the crisis. Who the "survivors" are, is unknown and this is intended as such to focus on "the Governor" rather than on the survivors. Female reporters also use nominalisation processes like **presentation** and **determination** to project male social actors who have to repress the gang that commit crimes. The use of nominalisations is more likely to cause challenge in understanding the sentence. Fairclough (1995a) puts it that the notion of ideology suggests distortion and manipulation of the truth in pursuit of specific interests. This suggests that, trying to background or foreground the agent of an action through nominalisation or passivation is purely ideological and the reporter's intention is made manifest. However, it is realized that both male and female reporters use nominalisation processes to either background or foreground male and female actors of the Anglophone crisis.

Considering active and passive sentence constructions in the analyses of newspaper articles in this study, one realises that female reporters write more in the active voice and their male counterparts write more in the passive voice. For example, in TGP, the female reporters construct active sentences at 69.56% and passive ones at 30.43% while the male reporters realise active sentences at 36% and passive ones at 64%. These results show that male reporters use



Literary Horizon

An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

more of the passive voice while the female reporters use more of the active voice when writing reports. It also implies that female reporters use more news sources than male reporters. Leeuwen (1996) writes that activation means that actors are allocated dynamic and active roles in a given activity. Passivisation means that actors are assigned passive roles in the activity. For example, Troops have killed five terrorists. Troops have an active role and five terrorists have a passive role. Van Leeuwen (2005) in this light explains that discourses can be excluded or included in the elements of social practice for representing certain kinds of actors for suiting our interest and purpose.

14. Conclusion

This paper had as objective to examine how gender is represented in newspaper reports on the Anglophone crisis between 2017 and 2021. It went further to analyse the linguistic items used in news articles to depict gender; highlighting the nominalisation processes; positive, negative and neutral tones used in newspaper headlines and the active and passive sentence constructions. The study revealed that there is under/misrepresentation of gender in news reports of the Anglophone crisis in newspapers through the language use of male and female reporters and the portrayal of male and female stakeholders of the crisis in newspapers.

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An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

www.literaryhorizon.com

February, 2023

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An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

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February, 2023

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An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal

Vol. 2, Issue 4

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February, 2023

ISSN: 2583-0201

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