

Critical Discourse Analysis of The Punch and The Guardian Newspaper Reports on the FOI Bill

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Abstract

This study investigates the way news writers in selected Nigerian newspapers employed language to express their underlying interests in the Freedom of Information (FOI) bill which engaged Nigerians' attention from 1999 to 2011. For the bill's social relevance, the media and other pressure groups demanded that it should be signed into an Act by the Federal Government but the Government refused because it perceived information as a means of power control. Nigerians canvassed for the bill's approval in order to be empowered to ask questions about the way they were governed, while the Federal Government believed that the Act would make journalists have unhindered access to information which they might deploy indiscriminately in exposing perceived corrupt practices in the country. Data for the work were derived from The Punch and The Guardian newspapers which widely published reports on the Bill between 2007 and 2008 and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was engaged as the theoretical framework because of its potential to reveal the news writers' ideological positions on the bill. Analysis showed that framing, idioms, rhetoric, referencing and words and expressions of anger, doubt and rejection were among the linguistic strategies deployed in the news writers' reports to help accelerate the bill's approval.

Keywords: Newspapers, reports, FOI bill, discourse, analysis.

Introduction

From 1999 to 2011, Nigerians canvassed for the passage of the Freedom of Information (FOI) bill in the National assembly without success. Their argument was that the bill had the capability to stamp out corruption in the country and also accord people the opportunity to know how they were governed, yet government refused to sign it into law. News writers canvassed vigorously for the bill's approval by employing varied communicative events such as news, editorials, opinion articles, features and interviews to highlight its relevance to national development. They constructed their reports in a manner that reflected their interests in the bill so as to make readers support it, but the Federal Government declined to sign it. Those who supported the bill opined that if it became a law, it would facilitate the political and economic development of the country and also empower Nigerians to demand information from any government establishment or agency without explanation on why they sought the information. The bill could also stop the corruption being perpetrated by government agencies under different laws and assist in stopping the huge sum of money being expended on corruption-tackling commissions like: Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). They observed that such huge funds could be spent on more tangible and progressive ventures within the polity.

Restriction of public access to official information was backed up by such laws as the Official Secrets Act, Evidence Act and Statistics Act. Nigerians believed that the FOI bill would erase official secrecy when signed into law, facilitate popular participation in governance and enhance journalism practice in the country. The bill stated in its explanatory memorandum that it would provide a right of access to public information or records kept by government, public institutions or private bodies carrying out public functions for citizens and non-citizens of the country. This would increase availability of public records and information to Nigerian citizens to enable them to participate more effectively in the making and administration of laws and policies and to promote accountability of public officers.

Public information was hitherto inaccessible to Nigerians and the bulk of official information in the country was classified under different Acts which shielded public officers from public scrutiny. Journalists who required information to work effectively were denied access to it and even their work environment became so intolerant that many of them were targets of abduction. All of these informed the diverse news presentations on the FOI bill which formed the interest of this study. The study also examined the way language was deployed in the newspaper reports to show the news writers' ideological positions on the bill, for no news item is entirely neutral in presentation (Fowler et al. 1979; Mey: 1993).

Methodology

Data for this work were derived from the 2007 and 2008 editions of *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers because of their wide coverage of the FOI bill issue and their social value. Nine Nigerian national newspapers were discovered to have published 209 reports on the bill between 1999 and 2011. *The Guardian* recorded 19 of the reports in 2007 alone and 10 in 2008 while *The Punch* recorded 16 in 2007 and 24 in 2008. Thus the two newspapers published 69 reports on the bill within the two years under study, which were the highest and which formed 33 percent of the total number of reports published on the bill between 1999 and 2011 in the nine newspapers sampled. Besides, the years (2007 and 2008) were crucial to the study because 2007 marked the end of President Olusegun Obasanjo's two-term regime of four years each, which began in 1999 when the bill was introduced. The flurry of stories on the bill published in 2007 was aimed at putting pressure on the president to sign the bill before leaving office. The year 2008 was also crucial as focus was shifted on the then new president, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, to sign the bill quickly and make history, unlike his predecessor who failed in that regard.

Media Discourse (The Print Media)

Media discourse as appertaining to this study refers to language use in the media to reveal the ideological perspectives from which news writers

write their reports on the FOI bill. Specifically, it refers to how the newspapers' interest or disinterest in the bill's passage into law is expressed in diverse opinion articles and reports. Media discourse examines the interactive process that exists between writers and readers through the instrumentality of language and also investigates how media texts are produced, why they are so produced and what socio-cultural processes influence the choice made (Fairclough: 1995). The effect of media discourse is the stimulation of corresponding action from news consumers. Scollon (1998) and Fairclough (2003) see media discourse as a "social process" which involves an interaction between news writers and consumers. The role of news consumers and the process of interpreting news are crucial in it since there are implicit ideologies in news designs and production (Fairclough: 1995). Therefore, the way reports on the FOI bill are presented in *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers to generate public support for it forms the basis of this paper.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The analytical approach adopted for this study is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which helps to understand media messages and ideologies implicit in news production. It perceives language as a social action and analyses discourse to find hidden meaning (Austin 1962; Levinson 1983; McGregor 2003). Fairclough (2000) identifies three important areas covered by CDA as: social structure, culture and discourse. According to him, social structure is concerned with ethnic identity, gender and status etc; culture has to do with the required pattern of social behaviour while discourse is concerned with the use of words. CDA helps to reveal how the interests of news writers are represented in their reports and how values, attitude, power relations, and ideology influence the way newspapers present their reports to their publics (Fairclough: 1995) .

Values and attitude are salient parts of the two concepts of modality and transitivity which respectively help to show the degree of writers' commitment to the truth about what they write as well as the choices available to them from which they could select. Modality performs interpersonal functions and reveals the writer's evaluation of a situation

(Fowler: 1986; 1991; Fairclough: 1995b). Transitivity represents the linguistic choice we make from the numerous choices available to us to describe a particular event (Simpson 1993). A newspaper's ideology forms the basis of its position on an issue. This is revealed in news which Fowler (1991) says is both a product of some institutional processes and the ideology of the newspaper. He argues that news is not "found" or "gathered" as much as it is "made", for news is a creation of a journalistic process, an artifact or commodity. Mey (1993) opines that news writing cannot be absolutely neutral because the presupposition of neutrality is a "zero point" i.e. the existence of a non-ideological position. Reports represent various class struggles within society and a newspaper proves its commitment to its readers by the way the paper itself is structured. Some sentences are actively constructed to spur readers into action while some focus only on actors and not on those affected by the action. These have ideological bases. Ideology describes the ways in which what we say and think interacts with society; it refers to a particular conception of the world that implicitly manifests in various social activities (Simpson 1993; Fairclough 1995). Haynes (1992:5) describes ideology as the overall way in which content of situation is understood and acted upon while Taiwo (2007) sees it as referring to attitudes, set of beliefs, values and doctrines, with reference to religious, political, social and economic life which shape the individual's and group's perception, and through which reality is constructed and interpreted.

The FOI Bill and Assumptions

The FOI bill seeks to provide a right of access to public information or records kept by government, public institutions or private bodies carrying out public functions in order for Nigerians to participate effectively in governance. However, there are conditions attached to having access to any required information, and until the conditions are met, such access is not guaranteed. Among the basic assumptions of the bill's content are that there could be embezzlement of public funds and litigation in the process of seeking disclosure of public information as well as the possibility of denial of access to required information. The inclusion of the clause tagged "Destruction or falsification of record" in Section 10

of the bill reveals the ideology behind such inclusion vis-à-vis the Nigerian situation. Fraud is believed to be perpetrated in public offices in Nigeria and as a cover-up records are either destroyed or falsified. Section 10 of the bill states that it shall be a criminal offence punishable on conviction to a maximum of three years imprisonment for any official who tries to either willfully destroy any record kept in his custody or attempts to alter same before it is released to any person, entity or community applying for it.

There is also the 'interpretations' clause in Section 33 of the bill which presupposes that there could be a misinterpretation of some technical terms in the bill. The issues of international affairs and defence are so sensitive that information concerning them might not be disclosed to the public. But Section 13 (1) states that the head of government or a public institution may refuse to disclose any record if the disclosure would be injurious to the conduct of international affairs or the defence of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces of Nigeria is the custodian of many top national secrets which, if disclosed, could affect the operations of international affairs and the country's defence. But Section 13 (2) reveals that the court may override the refusal by the head of government to disclose the information applied for. The bill provides that information about government institutions should be published in federal gazette to facilitate easy reference and interpretation. The head of government or public institution to which the bill applies is expected to describe in the gazette documents containing the names, salaries, titles and dates of all the employees and officers of the institution. The assumption is that there could be fraud or embezzlement of public funds, in the future, which might require an investigation of some officials. Such investigation will reveal the officials' salaries, dates of their employment and so on, and their probity and accountability might be called to question if they appear to have been spending more than they earn.

Analysis and Findings

News writers employ diverse linguistic features to show their support for the FOI bill. They are as follows:

Lexical Features:

Lexis is the bedrock of semantic analysis and it is connected to the style of discourse Van Dijk (1988). When there is lexical retraction, the effect achieved by the continuity of lexical meaning cannot be misplaced since one way to understand the ideology behind a text is to check the lexical features of such text Halliday and Hassan (1976). Also, Fowler (1991) says that categorization by vocabulary is an integral part of the reproduction of ideology. In this section, lexical features deployed in newspaper reports on the FOI bill are examined in relation to their functions and they are thematically categorized as: words and expressions of rejection, words and expressions of doubt and words and expressions of anger.

Words and Expressions of Rejection:

These words and expressions show that the authorities who should support the bill oppose it and hence refuse to sign it. Among such words are: refusal, kicked against, disagree, stalled proceedings, criticisms, snubbing, opposed, decline, rejected, bottlenecks, suffered major setbacks, etc. Examples are given below:

- i. More criticisms have trailed President Olusegun Obasanjo's *refusal* to sign into law the Freedom of Information bill. *Guardian* May 14, 2007
- ii. Obasanjo *declines* to sign FOI bill. *The Guardian*, April 28, 2007
- iii. Reps *reject* motion on FOI bill, pass 2008 budget. *The Guardian*, August 1, 2008
- iv. Members of the House of Representatives *stalled* proceedings over the reintroduction of the Freedom of Information bill. *The Punch*, July 11, 2007.

In the given extracts, the words in italics such as: *refusal*, *declines*, *reject* and *stall* belong to the same semantic field of disapproval or rejection. They show the unwillingness of the relevant authorities in

government to pass the bill and sign it into an active law. 'Refusal' is the noun of the verb 'refuse' which means to 'decline' to do something which one has the power to do. President Obasanjo and the national assembly had the power to pass and sign the bill but they refused as shown in Extracts (i), (ii) and (iii). The word 'stall' in Extract (iv) means 'delay', which was what the assembly did to the bill for many years so that it would not become a law in Nigeria.

Words and Expressions of Doubt:

These are words and expressions which show that opponents of the bill are unnecessarily afraid of the bill even when there is no justification for the fears. They are: *afraid, concerns, worried, shocking, blanket fears, misconception, misgiving, suspicion, fears created about the FOI bill and trepidation*. Here are examples:

- i. The Media for Democracy said it was *worried* by President Olusegun Obasanjo's refusal to assent to the FOI bill. *The Punch*, May 4, 2007
- ii. The President made the *shocking* declaration yesterday that he would not sign the FOI bill because of some clauses there. *The Guardian* April 28, 2007
- iii. The *fears created about the FOI bill* are not proper and misplaced. Why are people *afraid* of the media access to information? *The Punch*, June 4, 2008

The worry expressed by the Media for Democracy in Extract (i) stemmed from the needless apprehensions of President Olusegun Obasanjo to assent the bill because of certain clauses there which he thought could cause problems later. Another unfounded misgiving about the bill as shown in Extract (iii) was that news writers would use it to fight against government and its agencies because they believed that the bill was meant for journalists only, and not for all Nigerians.

Words and Expressions of Anger:

These ones show strong feelings of displeasure about government's attitude toward the bill. Among them are: *attack, intolerant, vindictive, tempers rose, outrage, vexation and hammer*.

- i. There was another *rowdy* session at the House of Representatives on Thursday as some lawmakers kicked against the reintroduction of the Freedom of Information bill. *The Punch*, Aug 1, 2008
- ii. You can also judge this by the ceaseless expression of public *outrage* which has trailed the refusal of the President to assent to the bill. *The Guardian* May 9, 2007
- iii. For its continued snubbing of the FOI bill, both arms of the national assembly have come under the *hammer* of Newspaper Proprietors association of Nigeria (NPAN). (*The Guardian*, Nov 14, 2008).

A 'rowdy' session in the national assembly over the FOI bill is a sign of anger expressed by some of its members. The word, 'rowdy', means noisy and disorderly, and they both express anger. The rowdy atmosphere came about in the national assembly when supporters and opponents of the bill in the House went against each other to establish their divergent positions on it. Also, 'outrage' which indicates an extremely strong reaction of anger, reveals the position of the Nigerian public toward President Obasanjo's refusal to sign the bill. This suggests that the president and the national assembly members were the only ones who did not see a good reason to approve the bill.

Discourse Features

Idioms

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines idiom as a group of words that has a special meaning different from the ordinary meaning of each separate word. Examples abound in the following examples: "To continue to delay the passage of the bill is to *betray the mandate* and confidence of the masses" (*The Punch*, July 5, 2008). To 'betray the mandate' indicates disloyalty and suggests that the politicians elected into offices acted contrary to the wishes of Nigerians by refusing to sign the FOI bill which could serve as a veritable tool to fight against corruption affecting the country's development. Idioms such as: "The bill will *give more teeth* to this administration's avowed war against corruption" (*The Punch*, Jan 24 2008) and "With an FOI Act, citizens will be encouraged to *blow the whistle* on corrupt public officials" (*The Punch*, Jan 24, 2008) clearly accentuate the bill's potency to restore sanity to the corruption-

laden Nigerian society. To “give more teeth” to something suggests adding more power or energy to the thing to make it more effective, whereas to “blow the whistle” is to report or publish illegal practices so as to forestall a repeat.

Referencing

Reference, according to web free dictionary, is the action of alluding to something or using a source of information in order to ascertain something. Reference is usually made for the purpose of comparison in order to help hit one’s target in terms of communicative effectiveness. It sometimes gives additional relevant information to lift an argument. Writers on the FOI bill made certain references to help their campaign for its passage as shown in the following examples:

- i. *About 75 countries around the world now have freedom of information laws.* Undoubtedly the passage of this bill into law will enhance Nigeria’s standing in the comity of nations. *The Guardian*, Feb. 7, 2008
- ii. Nigeria has an obligation to adopt a legal instrument to give its citizens access to public records and documents under *Article Four of the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa.* *The Guardian*, May 4, 2007
- iii. The coalition in a statement by Lanre Arogundade said *no meaningful war could be waged against corruption* where the citizens were denied access to information. *The Punch*, May 4, 2007.
- iv. *Currently the law is in operation in over 60 countries.* Nigeria should join such African countries like Angola, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe to adopt the legislation. *The Punch*, Jan. 24, 2008

The allusion made to other countries already operating the freedom of information law indicates that Nigeria is lagging behind among the comity of nations by refusing to accept the FOI law. Reference is made to the anti-corruption war of the Federal Government in relation to the FOI bill to prove its potency in arresting corrupt practices in Nigeria. The allusion made to ‘Article Four of the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa’ implies that government is denying Nigerians their rights to freedom of expression as contained in the

continental article by its refusal to sign the bill into law. These arguments were geared towards compelling government to approve the bill.

Rhetoric

Rhetoric is the persuasive dimension of language meant to make communication more effective and make people understand what is said about a situation or event (van Dijk: 1988). Rhetoric encompasses description which gives detail for effect and seeks to establish the truthfulness of a report. It provides supportive and elaborative details for exposition, persuasion and narration (Hoffmann: 2007). The italicized parts of the following extracts are rhetorical:

- i. The bill, *considered fundamental for a transparent accountable functioning of democracy*, has been denied presidential assent. *The Guardian* July 7, 2007
- ii. You will recall that the outgoing president is *the same person who, at his Ota farm, firmly and boldly, inscribed on the wall that, dogs and journalists are not allowed*. *The Punch*, May 8, 2007
- iii. The National Assembly is to ensure that the bill *which spent nearly four years with the federal lawmakers* is assented to by the president. *The Guardian*, July 7, 2007
- iv. Yola *who is also the solicitor general of the Federation* said that government could not influence the passage of the bill. *The Punch*, Nov 4, 2008

Referring to the FOI bill as ‘fundamental for a transparent accountable functioning of democracy’, in Extract (i) is the writer’s comment intended for readers’ persuasion. It reveals a major quality of the bill which is that it could strengthen the country’s democracy and therefore, Nigerians should sustain their persistence in asking for it. Extract (ii) is the writer’s exposition on President Obasanjo as a strong enemy of news writers. If the president would not tolerate journalists around his Ota farm as he would not tolerate dogs, that perhaps explains his refusal to sign the bill. Extract (iii) indicts the National assembly for keeping the FOI bill for four years without attending to it thus exposing the law makers as antagonists of the bill for selfish reasons. Yola’s identity is revealed in Extract (4) as the ‘solicitor general of the

federation' to expose government's hypocrisy because, as a lawyer and government's advocate, Yola should be a strong defender of the people and their fundamental human rights.

Foregrounding

In Systemic Functional Linguistics, foregrounding refers to a prominent part of a text that contributes to the total meaning of the text. Halliday (1973) says that foregrounding performs highlighting functions whereby some features of the language of a text stand out in some way, and Simpson (2004) describes foregrounding as a stylistic strategy which acquires salience in the art of drawing attention to itself. For the sake of this analysis, foregrounding is grouped thematically into three broad categories such as foregrounding of actors, foregrounding of issues and foregrounding of events.

Foregrounding of Actors

- i. Ex-envoy, others urge quick assent to information bill – *The Guardian* May 4, 2007
- ii. Obasanjo declines to sign FOI bill – *The Guardian* April 28, 2007
- iii. Reps reject motion on FOI bill – *The Guardian*, Aug 1, 2008
- iv. Members of the House of Representatives on Tuesday stalled proceedings over the reintroduction of the freedom of information bill – *The Punch* Nov 24, 2008
- v. The Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN) on Tuesday expressed a desire to work with the Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria (BON) to secure the passage of the freedom of information bill - *The Punch* Nov 26, 2008

Different actors are fore-grounded by news writers in the extracts above in order to reveal their role in the struggle for the passage of the FOI bill. The ex-envoy, NPAN, BON and others who desire a quick action on it know its importance and the desperate attempt made by the legislature and the presidency to stall its passage. Extract (ii) exposes President Obasanjo as anti-people because he opposes what the country and her citizens need. Also, extracts (iii) and (iv) expose members of the House of Representatives as opponents of the bill, considering the

way they rejected it on the floor of the house. It shows that they do not believe that it is meant to help Nigeria grow but is designed to advance the cause of news writers only. That explains the protracted debate it generated for many years. In all the extracts, sentences are active and agents of the actions are revealed.

Foregrounding of Issues

- i. Freedom of information bill, panacea for free press – *The Guardian*, May 14, 2007
- ii. The fears created about the FOI bill are not proper and misplaced – *The Punch* June 4, 2008
- iii. To continue to delay the passage of the bill is to betray the mandate and confidence of the masses – *The Punch* July 5, 2008
- iv. FOI bill: enough information is available to you, Nigerians reply Bankole

The various issues fore-grounded in the given extracts show the value placed on the issues. The bill is accorded prominence in Extract (i) to suggest its relevance as a “panacea for free press.” The Nigerian press has operated under harrowing conditions since the country’s independence in 1960 and journalists have had little access to the official information they require to function effectively. Many of them who scooped official information were arrested and imprisoned for leaking official secrets. But the FOI bill’s passage has the propensity to facilitate the smooth operation of journalists as they shall be duly protected under the FOI Act. Extract (ii) is hinged on the impression that news writers will use the FOI bill to attack government and its agencies rather than use it to work for the progress of the country at large. Such impression is the reason for the protracted debate on the bill in the national assembly. Nigerians’ eagerness to see the bill passed into law necessitates what the Speaker, House of Representatives, Dimeji Bankole, is told in Extract (iv) that he needs no further information on the bill to know that it is being canvassed for in the interest of Nigeria and not for the personal interest of journalists.

Foregrounding of Events

- i. There was another rowdy session at the House of representatives on Thursday as some law makers kicked against a move to reconsider the freedom of information bill – *The Punch* August 1, 2008.
- ii. More criticisms have continued to trail President Olusegun Obasanjo's refusal to sign into law the freedom of information bill – *The Guardian* May 14 2007
- iii. For its continued snubbing of the FOI bill, both arms of the national assembly have come under the hammer of Newspaper Proprietor Association of Nigeria. *The Guardian*, Nov 14, 2008

Actions are fore-grounded in the given extracts to show that the non-passage of the FOI bill into law is unpopular with Nigerians. Words and expressions such as 'rowdy session', 'criticisms' and 'come under hammer' show people's reactions to the lack of interest shown by the presidency and the national assembly to sign the bill into an Act. It means that Nigerians appreciate the value of the bill which could serve as an antidote against corruption that has permeated every facet of the country's socio-political system. It also shows that people are ready to defend the bill and see to it that it becomes a law for the country to grow.

Framing

This is the point of view of a writer in interpreting discourse. Fairclough (1995) says that framing draws attention to how surrounding features of the reporting discourse can influence the way in which represented discourse is interpreted. Utwente (2014) describes framing as the way news writers present the events and issues they cover and how audiences interpret such issues and events. This indicates that frames function as agenda-setters to influence news perception and show the audience what to think about and how to think about it. Framing is manipulative and makes others accept one meaning over another.

- i. Mr Frank Nweke Jr claimed that President Olusegun Obasanjo was yet to receive the bill. *The Guardian*, May 22, 2007
- ii. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo claimed that he did not receive the copy of the bill. *The Guardian*, July 6, 2007

- iii. Those opposed to the bill claimed that they were not consulted before the name of Mrs Dabiri Erewa was changed to that of Mr Eta Enang. *The Punch*, Aug 1, 2008.

The word 'claimed' used in these extracts is manipulative, interpretive and questions the truthfulness of what is said. A neutral option is the introductory verb 'said' which makes a news writer non-partisan. The whereabouts of the FOI bill sent to the presidency were said to be unknown. Both the Minister of Information, Frank Nweke Jr, and President Olusegun Obasanjo denied receiving a copy of the bill. Also, members of the House of Representatives who opposed the bill denied knowledge of the replacement of Eta Enang by Dabiri Erewa as a member of the House Committee handling issues concerning the bill. Mrs Dabiri Erewa, a journalist-member of the House of Representatives and strong supporter of the bill, was made to replace Mr Eta Enang, also a member of the House on the committee. Enang was discovered by the bill's proponents to be opposed to it. This led to another protracted debate on the bill. The writer of this report believes that members of the House knew about the change but only 'claimed' that they did not because they did not want the bill.

Thematic Structuring

The way topics or themes on the FOI bill are structured in *Guardian* and *Punch*, newspapers reveals their interest in its passage. A topic or theme is what a particular discourse is all about. Theme is the summary or the most important information of a text (van Dijk: 1988). Fairclough (1995) says that the headline of a news report formulates the overall theme of a text. How such headline is schemed is dependent on the purpose it is meant to achieve.

- i. Journalists urge National Assembly to override Obasanjo. *The Punch*, May 4, 2007
- ii. Foundation faults Obasanjo's refusal to sign Freedom of Information bill. *The Guardian*, May 14, 2007
- iii. "Pass FOI bill now or history will mock you" *The Punch*, July 7, 2008

Thematic structuring of these story headlines shows the writers' desperation in their agitation for the passage of the bill. The verb 'urge' in Extract (i) is a mark of desperation which also means 'encourage', 'motivate', 'stimulate' or 'appeal to'. For journalists to urge the national assembly to override Obasanjo is indicative of their disbelief in President Obasanjo's theory that the bill has some controversial clauses that should be expunged before he could sign it. Their interpretation of the President's statement is that he did not like the bill and so, would not sign it. The same disbelief goes for Extract (ii) which faults the president for his refusal to sign the bill. In Extract (iii), the headline which reads "Pass the bill now or history will mock you" is an imperative attributed to an interviewee. The headline is supposedly an extract from the interview and the quotation marks indicate that the headline caption is the direct statement of the interviewee, whereas there is no such expression in the entire interview. The portion of the interview from where the reporter cast the headline is not a command but a statement given as follows: "The Freedom of Information bill will be passed into law by the present National Assembly or another one will do that and put the incumbent legislators to shame."

Conclusion

This study has examined media discourse on the FOI bill, using CDA as the theoretical framework. It has shown the prominent discourse features employed by the news writers to suggest the bill's desirability. CDA assisted in revealing the underlying ideologies behind the way *The Punch* and *The Guardian* news writers canvassed for the bill's passage in their reports and discourse on the bill facilitated the introduction of other discourse areas such as economy, history and politics to prove the bill's social relevance. The study has also revealed that the power of information in society informed the demand for the passage of the FOI bill, as access to it has the potential to guarantee Nigerians good governance, economic and political emancipation as well as admirable international image.

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