

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC EXPLORATION OF LANGUAGE USE AND REPRESENTATION IN PAKISTANI ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze how Pakistani English newspapers, specifically Dawn and The Express Tribune, use language to construct and represent social and cultural realities. It reflects on which linguistic features are used to depict social and cultural issues, how these features frame narratives, and how newspaper language mirrors Pakistan's social and cultural context. Using a qualitative research design with textual analysis, this research examines editorials and headlines that were published over two months using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework. The analysis focuses on linguistic features such as transitivity, modality, evaluation, and thematic organization to uncover how these elements frame social narratives, highlight power relations, and convey ideological viewpoints. The results indicate that while relational, mental, and linguistic processes convey perception, characterization, and opinion, material processes still predominate in event representation. By combining factual reporting with critical remarks, interpersonal choices such as modality and declarative mood help readers understand social and political issues. The lack of behavioral processes emphasizes a formal and impersonal reporting tone. Coherence is ensured, and reader engagement is increased by textual organization using rheme and thematic patterns. The study shows how language elements in Pakistani newspapers influence cultural understanding, transmit ideology, and create social meaning. By emphasizing how language shapes public perception, this study advances media linguistics and lays the groundwork for further research on linguistic representation and ideological production in Pakistani media.

Keywords: *Systemic Functional Linguistics, Pakistani Newspapers, Transitivity, Modality, Social Representation*

Introduction

Language has a profound impact on people's perceptions and significantly influences the world around us. It reflects societal values, identities, and beliefs; besides, it serves as a channel for communication. Despite the rapid expansion of electronic media, Newspapers, particularly editorials, remain a vital platform for public discussion. Newspapers have the potential to shape public opinion and depict social and cultural aspects through the effective use of words, tone, and style. The study of language in newspapers offers valuable insights into the interaction between media and society through linguistic expression. Language is regarded as a human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and wants by consciously creating a system of symbols (Herman, 2015).

Media language, especially the newspapers under this framework, becomes a crucial field of study as it shows how language both shapes and constructs social realities. In a democratic society, the media have become a significant source of information for the general public (Strömbäck, 2008). Pakistani English newspapers are unique in conveying international and national issues while

addressing local cultural viewpoints in multilingual countries like Pakistan, where English is a prominent language in addition to the local language. As time passes, English newspapers have evolved not only as a source of information but also as an instrument of social influence. They utilize language that reflects certain viewpoints that establish social systems and have ideological implications.

In this research, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is used as a guiding framework to explore how structure, tone, and language combine to reflect social and cultural realities. It illustrates the way human language choices contribute to a systematic interpretation of social contexts. Halliday (2009) states that language is a significant asset of meaning-making; it is “a part of reality, a shaper of reality, and a metaphor for reality.” This viewpoint aims to demonstrate societal attitudes in media language to get a better understanding of how language works in the Pakistani media landscape. This research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify linguistic features used to represent social and cultural issues in Pakistani English newspapers.
2. To examine how these features frame social and cultural narratives.
3. To analyze how newspaper language reflects underlying ideologies about Pakistan’s social and cultural realities.

Significance of the Study

This research aims to examine how Pakistani newspapers, specifically *Dawn* and *The Express Tribune*, use language to reflect social and cultural meaning using the SFL framework. By analyzing editorials and headlines, the study highlights how lingual choices such as transitivity, modality, and evaluation are used to shape readers’ perceptions of social and cultural realities. The research will also contribute to the growing body of work on media by fusing linguistics theory with practical textual analysis. Beyond that, it will help researchers, educators, and media professionals comprehend how language serves as an instrument of ideology and representation in Pakistan's print media environment.

Research Gap

Studies have shown that considerable research has been conducted in the field of media linguistics, but limited attention has been given to the language use in Pakistani English newspapers through the lens of SFL. There is a lack of significant work that explores how linguistic functions such as transitivity, modality, and evaluation are employed to represent social and cultural realities in the Pakistani media context. Thus, by using the SFL theoretical framework to analyze language use and representation in Pakistani English newspapers, the current study aims to close this gap.

Literature Review

Newspapers, because of their unique social, temporal, and spatial boundaries, provide distinctive language that differs from other forms of writing. Osisanwo (2021) observes that linguistic decisions about using vocabulary and grammar contribute to maintaining readers' attention. The extensive linguistic diversity of Pakistan is reflected in the press (Asad et al., 2019). Mezzer and Sial (2010) assert that the literacy level has profoundly impacted the circulation patterns of newspapers throughout Pakistan. *TD* and *TET* are popular and independent English newspapers, and are most read by different segments of society. Students used a variety of theoretical frameworks to study how language creates meaning, reflects ideology, and changes representation in news reporting (Bednarek et al., 2012).

Busa (2013) states that to grab the attention of the reader, headlines are usually one to two lines long, written in huge, bold, and telegraphic style. The format of conciseness reflects the

newspaper's social, cultural, and ideological position that has both communicative and persuasive purposes. Various scholars examine the headlines' structural patterns and construction, which affect readers' perceptions and interaction with the news (Dor, 2003; Saxena, 2006). Other scholars have studied its pragmatic and cognitive influence, which demonstrates how headlines can also affect readers' emotional reaction and perception (Kwon, 2002; Noh, 2010). Lee's (2012) research focuses on a comparative study of Korean and American newspapers to identify linguistic and cultural variations. The language of print media has not been thoroughly explored compared to research conducted in foreign countries. Sadaf (2011) examined the lingual features of Urdu and English in Pakistani newspapers and found that both languages contribute to the sociocultural diversity of Pakistan. Her research advances the knowledge of how the English language functions in print media, where social and cultural hierarchies are frequently reflected. Uzair et al. (2012) investigated how Pakistani English media encourage lexical variations, and how regional language preferences reflect character, identity, and the changing state of Pakistan. Their findings demonstrate that newspaper language not only conveys meaning but also represents national identity and ideology, highlighting how journalism acts as a bridge between linguistic creativity and sociocultural interaction. Fowler (1991) gives insight that newspaper language can never be neutral; rather, it is a potent instrument that creates societal beliefs and gives them a new view.

According to recent studies, the SFL approach to analyzing media text is becoming increasingly important because it provides deeper insights into the language used in these texts (Johnson et al., 2022). No research directly focusing on Pakistani English news articles from a systemic functional viewpoint exists, leaving a significant research gap. Fatima, S., Parveen, M., & Qasim, H. M. (2024). Rizwan (2019) examines Dawn.com and Zem.tv.com conversations using SFL, which emphasizes the representation of the philosophical worldview of Pakistani social media users. The study demonstrates how language serves as a communicative tactic for cultural and social ideas to reveal the lexicogrammatical patterns that were used to generate interpersonal meanings and legitimate strategies. In addition, Mohammed (2016) used a transitivity analysis of Al Jazeera's Arabic news coverage to investigate the ideological and attitudinal aspects of discourse structures. This study highlights how grammatical aspects are used in media language by examining how different processes, such as material, relational, mental, and verbal, were used to represent Nelson Mandela and other participants.

Ismayatim et al. (2018) carried out an in-depth investigation of transitivity patterns in media coverage of the 2013 Malaysian security forces' Lahad Datu airstrike event. For investigating how lingual choices influence media depictions to cover politically sensitive events, the study explored coverage in four English-language newspapers: TNST, TS, TPDI, and TPS. The researchers found notable variation in process types among newspapers by using a variety of analytical techniques, such as content analysis, metaphor analysis, thematic analysis, and especially Halliday's (1994) transitivity system within the SFL. As a result, variation is seen in reporting methods, with material processes being more common in TS, TPS, TPDI, but mental processes are more common in TNST. SFL serves as a tool for creating meaning and a network of connected decisions that demonstrates how language works in a social setting is based on Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) idea of transitivity. This approach enables researchers to investigate the construction and representation of the ideational meaning of various communication texts. Stylistics and critical discourse analysis have extensively studied the practicality of SFL and transitivity theory, the phenomenon where language structures generate different meanings and views (Mehmood, 2014).

Methodology

This research employed a qualitative research design, as its primary concern is to explore meanings, interpretations, and representations embedded in the language of Pakistani newspapers, specifically *Dawn* and *The Express Tribune*. This study's qualitative design is based on textual analysis, which enables researchers to give close attention to the language as an organized system of meaning-making. Through this approach, Halliday's (1994, 2014) SFL framework is used to analyze a selection of newspaper texts. This method makes it easier to investigate how various participant roles and process types, material, mental, relational, etc., create social realities and media representations of national ideologies.

This study adopted a purposive sampling, which entails the selection of texts that are rich in information and that provide valuable insights into the research's main concern (Etikan et al., 2016). For this purpose, two leading newspapers, *Dawn* and *The Express Tribune*, have been chosen because of their credibility, validity, and wide readership on both national and international levels. The data will be gathered over two-month periods, which offers a targeted time frame for recurring language patterns and allows researcher to identify the variation over the news events. Within these selected newspapers, editorials and headlines will be chosen for analysis. These sections have been targeted deliberately because they are rich in revealing social realities and power relations that are constructed through newspapers. While headlines are brief language devices that shape the readers' expectations, on the other hand, editorial pieces frequently express the viewpoints of the publication or individual authors.

Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), a theory developed by M. A. K. Halliday (1985). SFL recognizes language as a social semiotic system, a tool that people use to interpret social situations. Halliday argues on the fact that language actively constructs realities through the decisions made by speakers and authors rather than just reflecting them. SFL emphasizes that every linguistic decision helps to create meaning and focuses on various roles that linguistic structures play in communication.

Halliday proposed that language has three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Together, these metafunctions show how language forms cohesive messages, creates relationships, and reflects experience. They work concurrently in every clause.

- **Ideational Metafunction:** The ideational metafunction is a representation of how language organizes our perception of reality and constructs human experience. It is divided into two parts: logical and experiential. Logical connects experiences while experiential expresses experiences and actions. Transitivity encodes actions, events, states, and the people in them, making the experience component possible. Halliday (2014) distinguishes six categories of transitivity processes, each of which represents a distinct facet of experience: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential.
 - **Material Processes:** It expresses physical events and behaviors.
 - **Mental Processes:** It expresses perception, emotion, and cognition.
 - **Relational Processes:** It creates a relation of having and being.
 - **Verbal Processes:** It refers to the act of speaking and expressing.
 - **Behavioral Process:** It indicates psychological or physiological behaviors.
 - **Existential Process:** It denotes existence.

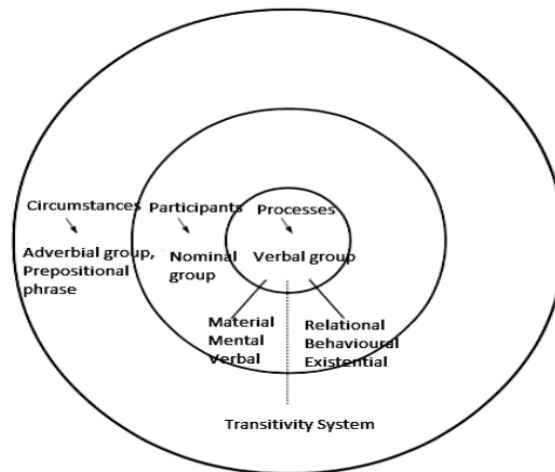


Figure 1. Components of Transitivity (Ammara et al., 2019)

- **Interpersonal Metafunction:** The interpersonal metafunction focuses on how language expresses attitudes, judgments, and formality levels between participants. It is made possible by modality structures and emotion. The Subject and Finite are two components of the mood system that work together to convey speech functions, including commands, questions, and declarations. It is separated into modulation, which is obligation and inclination, and modalization, which is probability and usuality (Rui & Jingxia, 2018). For example, the speaker's position about the information conveyed is indicated by adverbs like probably, always, should, or must.
- **Textual Metafunction:** The main function of textual metafunction is to create meaningful and cohesive text. It involves the distribution of theme, the beginning of a clause, and rheme, what is said about the theme, to maintain the flow of information. This metafunction ensures that the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions are effectively structured in a text that makes it cohesive contextually (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

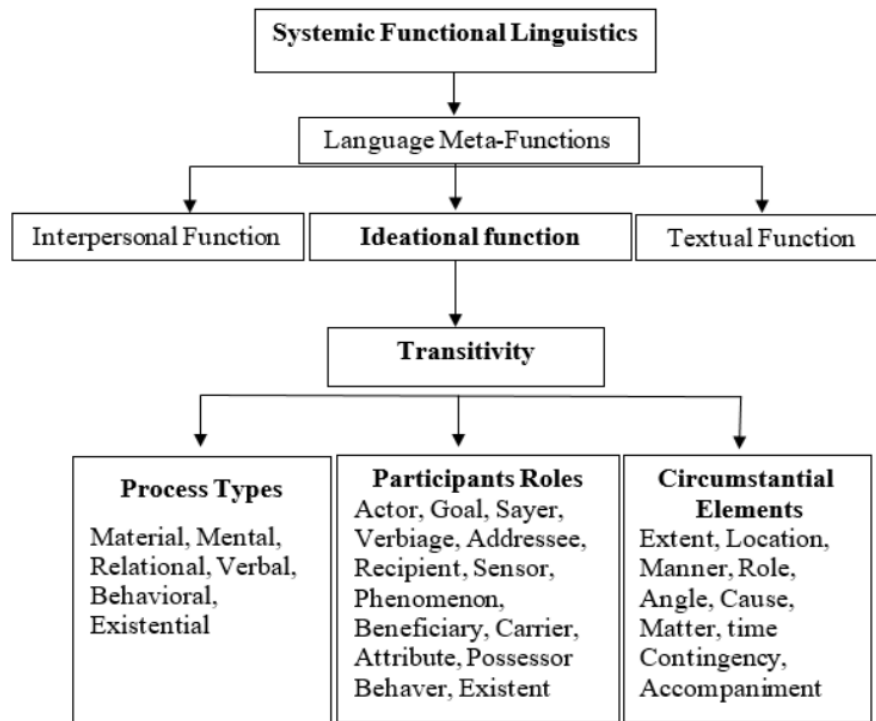


Figure 2. Theoretical Framework (Ammara et al., 2019)

Data Analysis

This section presents a textual analysis of editorials, opinion pieces, and headlines from Pakistani English newspapers, using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as the analytical framework. The study explores how language in these writings generates human experiences, expresses ideological viewpoints, and depicts social and cultural reality. The information was gathered over two months, from two prominent newspapers, *Dawn* and *The Express Tribune*. The selection of editorials and headlines was based on their ability to reflect power, ideology, and public emotion, as well as their connection to significant sociopolitical events. An overview of the gathered texts and headlines, along with information on authorship, section kinds, and publication dates, is given in the following tables.

Newspaper	Section	Title	Date	Author
Dawn	Editorial	Lies, deceit over Gaza	5 Oct 2025	Abbas Nasir
The Express Tribune	Editorial	Afghan wrangling	2 Oct 2025	Editorial Board

Table 1. Editorial and Opinion Dataset

Newspaper	Headline	Date
Dawn	Flood threat remains severe at rivers' confluence	12 Sep 2025
	Pakistan signals support for united anti-Israel front	17 Sep 2025
	Airspace ban on Indian aircraft extended	20 Sep 2025
	Pentagon chief Hegseth gives top generals 'dressing down'	1 Oct 2025
	Future conflict will lead to 'cataclysmic devastation', army warns India	5 Oct 2025
	Govt set to ink IMF deal after 'flood adjustments'	10 Oct 2025
The Express Tribune	Deluge ebbs but ordeal surges	10 Sep 2025
	Pakistan-KSA Accord redraws security maps	16 Sep 2025
	Afghan footprints deepen in Pakistan TTP attacks	23 Sep 2025
	AJK reels: 9 killed in protest violence	2 Oct 2025
	Neighbours discuss joint Afghan approach	7 Oct 2025
	Fragile peace dawns over Gaza	10 Oct 2025

Table 2. Headlines Dataset

“Lies, Deceit Over Gaza” Editorial by **Abbas Nasir**, published in *Dawn* on **October 5, 2025**

This editorial, written by Abbas Nasir and published in *Dawn* on October 5, 2025, offers a powerful critique of political manipulation and global hypocrisy surrounding the ongoing conflict in Gaza. The writer exposes how deceit, propaganda, and silence from powerful nations perpetuate violence and injustice. Using a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework, the analysis focuses on how language is employed to construct power dynamics, shape ideology, and represent moral positions.

• **Ideational Metafunction**

Excerpt	Actor	Material Process	Goal	Circumstance
1.	Hamas	accepted	terms set forth for a ceasefire	---
2.	The deceit	was laid	---	bare
3.	Israel's prime minister	mutilated	the agreed draft	during negotiation

4.	Young Moroccans	are battling	the police	in the streets
5.	Us (Muslim world)	are unwilling	---	to annoy the US

Table 3. Material Process

The material process in this editorial highlights the conflict-driven and vibrant nature of the global Gaza narrative by graphically illustrating the actions of political figures and collective movements. The statement that states, “ Hamas may have accepted some of the terms set forth for a ceasefire,” portrays Hamas as a political actor that is actively involved in making choices. Similar to this, the statement “ Israel’s psychopathic prime minister mutilated the agreed draft” expresses a negative ideological viewpoint. The word “mutilated” implies violence and manipulation, which reflects the author’s dislike of Israel’s political actions. The material process “battling” emphasizes physical opposition and social unrest in the phrase “Young Moroccans are out in the streets, battling the police,” which depicts the battle for power between the public and authority. The last instance, entitled “Many of us in the Muslim world are like our governments — docile and scared,” linguistically constructs an ideational opposition between aggressive resistance (the West) and passive submission (the Muslim world), contrasting passivity with the preceding action. The author reveals ethical accountability and moral hierarchies in political discourse through these tangible processes (Mohammed et al., 2016). The author of this editorial emphasizes agency, struggle, and complicity through these material processes, ultimately exposing how language is used to construct a moral and political hierarchy of action and inaction. The author’s ideological emphasis on accountability and ethical obligation in the context of Gaza is shown in the frequent use of active verbs and agentive subjects.

Excerpt	Senser	Mental Process	Phenomenon	Type
1.	One	can’t be blamed for not believing anyone	anyone in power and authority	Cognition
2.	Trump	was so unhappy	with Netanyahu	Emotion
3.	These Western nations	have time and again called for an end	to the Gaza genocide	Cognition
4.	Many of us in the Muslim world	feel	so superior to others	Emotion
5.	People in the West	have taken to the streets	challenging their governments	Perception / Volition

Table 4. Mental Process

Mental processes highlight how awareness, emotion, and belief systems influence both individual and international reactions to the Gaza conflict. As an example of collective cognitive disillusionment, the statement "one can't be blamed for not believing anyone" portrays society at large as intellectually skeptical of authority and emotionally spent. The phrase "can't be blamed" also fosters reader empathy by subtly connecting the audience with the author's pessimism about world affairs. The emotive process of "unhappy" personalizes political dynamics in "Trump was so unhappy with Netanyahu," portraying power talks as volatile and emotionally turbulent. Similarly, the statement "These Western nations have time and again called for an end to the Gaza genocide" demonstrates selective cognition; countries are aware of the moral dilemma, but their inaction reveals hypocrisy and cognitive confusion. One group's moral enlightenment and another's emotional apathy are shown in the emotional distinction between "Many of us in the

Muslim world feel so superior" and "People in the West have taken to the streets." By highlighting the mental states that support or oppose tyranny, the author challenges the psychology of selective empathy and denial. Mental process analysis reveals how cognition and emotion become language weapons for critique and persuasion, exposing the internalized ideologies and moral stance of global players.

Excerpt	Carrier	Relational Process	Attribute	Type
1.	Israel	is	an apartheid state	Attributive
2.	Ben Gvir and Smotrich	are	evil incarnate	Attributive
3.	Western powers	are	democratic	Attributive
4.	The Muslim world	is	helpless	Attributive
5.	This was	one window to the world of lies	Identifying	

Table 5. Relational Process

The editorial's relational processes, which demonstrate how entities are categorized, assessed, and contrasted, reflect ideological judgment and identity building. Through an attributive relational process, the claim that "Israel is an apartheid state" explicitly labels Israel, turning political criticism into a factual and moral assertion. The author's ideological position is strengthened by this linguistic choice, which portrays apartheid as an objective reality rather than an opinion. Similarly, by comparing people with embodied sin, "Ben Gvir and Smotrich are evil incarnate" strengthens moral judgment and demonstrates the author's emotional support for the oppressed. On the other hand, "Western powers are democratic," followed by criticism, generates an ironic contrast; democracy as a term is hollow when accompanied by inaction. The statement "The Muslim world is helpless" evokes both sympathy and criticism by illustrating a sense of helplessness shared by all. Ultimately, "This was one window to the world of lies" serves as an identifying relational sentence, summarizing the piece's central theme, which is deceit as the defining characteristic of international politics. The editorial creates ideological distinctions through these relational processes: moral/immoral, strong/weak, honest/deceptive, illustrating how language itself defines and upholds social realities, following Fowler's (1991) claim that ideological viewpoints are ultimately encoded in news discourse through linguistic representation.

Excerpt	Sayer	Verbal Process	Verbiage / Receiver	Type
1.	Trump	announced	the Gaza peace plan	Statement
2.	Qatar and Pakistan	said	this wasn't really what was agreed to	Report
3.	Netanyahu	told him	"Take the deal or leave it."	Command
4.	Western nations	have called for	an end to the Gaza genocide	Appeal

5.	People	are calling for	a boycott and blockade of the apartheid state	Protest
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Table 6. Verbal Process

The editorial's verbal processes demonstrate how speech and discourse serve as tools of protest, persuasion, and power. For example, "Trump announced the Gaza peace plan" presents political authority through a statement, transforming speech into an act of dominance; however, this dominance is questioned when "Qatar and Pakistan said this wasn't really what was agreed to," revealing contradictions between political statements and hidden truths. Likewise, "Netanyahu told him 'Take the deal or leave it'" encapsulates language as force, in which words are employed to distort discussions and exert power. The linguistic process of "calling for" a stop to the genocide in Gaza, on the other hand, demonstrates rhetorical diplomacy speech devoid of tangible action. Linguistic resistance is demonstrated by the sentence, "People are calling for a boycott and blockade of the apartheid state," which shifts the power of speech from institutions to the public's collective voice. The power struggle between institutional discourse and people's voices is reflected in these verbal activities (Bednarek et al., 2012). By contrasting elite speech that upholds power with grassroots speech that opposes it, the Author of the editorial illustrates how language influences ideological conflicts in political debate.

Excerpt	Existential Element	Process	Existent	Circumstance
1.	There	is	so much spin, so much deceit, so many lies	Global politics
2.	There	were	protests in Western cities	Around the world
3.	There	was	discontent among Gulf, NATO, and South Asian allies	During negotiations
4.	There	lies	hope	In humanity
5.	There	have been	calls for a ceasefire	Throughout the conflict

Table 7. Existential Process

The editorial's existential processes create a world of enduring deceit, resistance, and brittle optimism. The recurrent use of the phrases "There is" and "There were" depicts a contradictory and painful world. For instance, the statement "There is so much spin, so much deceit, so many lies" exposes the normalization of lies in political narratives and depicts deceit as a pervasive social reality. In a similar vein, "There were protests in Western cities" recognizes the presence of opposition and demonstrates that morality and the truth endure despite systemic corruption. By affirming the ongoing existence of conscience and compassion, the existential process recreates belief, symbolically reversing the prior dejection generated by the sentence "There lies hope in humanity." By using existential phrases, the author of this editorial reminds readers that language itself sustains social systems, despite their flaws, by turning abstract concepts (lying and hope) into linguistic realities. By these existential phrases, concrete language realities are created from

abstract moral principles (Halliday et al., 2014). These sentences establish both oppression and resistance, so reaffirming the editorial's central dichotomy of hopelessness and despair.

• **Interpersonal Metafunction**

Excerpt	Mood Type	Modality	Function in Discourse
“There is so much spin, so much deceit, so many lies...”	Declarative	High intensity (absoluteness)	Establishes factual authority and moral judgment
“One can’t be blamed for not believing anyone...”	Declarative with negative polarity	Low obligation, empathetic tone	Aligns the reader emotionally with skepticism
“ Hamas may have accepted some of the terms...”	Declarative with modal auxiliary “may”	Medium probability	Suggests uncertainty, critiques political ambiguity
“If anyone wants you or me to believe... then you’d believe and so would I that this columnist is wealthier than Elon Musk.”	Conditional & ironic declarative	Sarcastic modality	Challenges U.S.–Israel hypocrisy through irony
“Here is hoping their humanity triumphs, for there lies hope.”	Declarative with modal projection	Expressive modality (hope)	Ends on moral and emotional persuasion

Table 8. Mood and Modality Pattern

The interpersonal techniques of the editorial’s author create a voice of moral authority linked with human empathy. He asserts his ideological certainty by heavily relying on declarative words, such as "There is so much spin, so much deceit...", which fosters a sense of truth-telling against political manipulation. Modal verbs that indicate political possibilities rather than certainties, like may and would, convey measured skepticism and discreetly criticize the bending of truth in diplomatic speech. In the passage "you'd believe and so would I that this columnist is wealthier than Elon Musk," irony is used to undercut hegemonic power and turn the text into a linguistic act of resistance. The reader is ethically positioned by the author's evaluative phrases, such as "evil incarnate" and "docile and scared," which promote condemnation of political leaders who uphold injustice. His final words, "Here is hoping their humanity triumphs...", combine humanistic sensibility with political speech to turn criticism into compassion. These linguistic decisions create a link between emotional resonance and logical criticism (Noel 2020). All things considered, the interpersonal metafunction forges a bond between author and reader while advocating for a societal moral awakening and opposition to dishonest international politics.

• **Textual Metafunction**

Excerpt	Theme	Rheme	Type of Theme
“ Hamas may have accepted some of the terms...”	Hamas	may have accepted some of the terms	Topical Theme

“Qatar and Pakistan said this wasn’t what was agreed to.”	Qatar and Pakistan	said this wasn’t what was agreed to	Topical Theme
“These changes were made with the twin purpose of enabling Netanyahu...”	These changes	were made with the twin purpose	Topical Theme
“Here is hoping their humanity triumphs, for there lies hope.”	Here	is hoping their humanity triumphs	Interpersonal Theme

Table 9. Theme and Rheme Pattern

The author's topical themes offer distinct focal points that logically and chronologically organize the argument in this editorial. Coherence and thematic continuity are maintained throughout the text by starting each clause with a person or process that is essential to the situation as it is developing. To move readers from critical observation to moral consideration, the author carefully shifts subject types from topical to interpersonal, as evident in the transition from political actors to evaluative comments.

“Afghan Wrangling” Editorial, published in *The Express Tribune* on **October 2, 2025**

• **Ideational Metafunction**

Excerpt	Actor	Material Process	Goal	Circumstance
1.	Afghan opposition luminaries	made	headlines	in Islamabad
2.	Pakistan	host	Afghan opposition	in Pakistan
3.	Afghan civil society activists	were able to further	their envelope	during the two-day closed-door conference
4.	Pakistan	has been supportive	Afghans	historically / contextually
5.	Islamabad	stay aloof	from becoming a party	in internal political wrangling

Table 10. Material Process

Material process in this editorial conveys tangible actions by key participants. In Islamabad, prominent members of the Afghan opposition made headlines, demonstrating their engagement and influence. The ability of Afghan opposition and civil society activists to expand their envelope through Pakistan's hosting demonstrates political space for agency and negotiation. Pakistan's historical backing places previous contributions in context, while Islamabad's advice to maintain distance demonstrates cautionary action. Situations position these behaviors in a certain time and location, such as at the conference in Islamabad.

Excerpt	Senser	Mental Process	Phenomenon	Type
1.	Implicit observer	is/has not delivered	cohesive and vibrant society	Mental Relational / Cognition

2.	Afghan civil society activists	received	noticeable traction	Perception
3.	Pakistan	strived	for peace	Desire / Cognition

Table 11. Mental Process

This editorial's mental processes emphasize perception, consciousness, and assessment of the political landscape. The Kabul government is shown as not fulfilling its obligations, demonstrating a lack of trust in its ability to carry out its duties. According to their assessment and observation of political reactions, Afghan civil society activists are shown to be aware of the momentum their comments garner. Pakistan's efforts to preserve peace while striking a balance with its longstanding support for Afghan citizens also demonstrate a knowledge of the complex position. The research captures the cognitive dimension of participants' engagement, supporting Thompson's (2014) claim that mental processes reveal internalized opinions, attitudes, and feelings in speech.

Excerpt	Carrier	Relational Process	Attribute	Type
1.	The government in Kabul	is	inconclusive and undelivered on its promises	Attributive
2.	The Taliban regime	has been	discriminatory towards women	Attributive
3.	Pakistan's role	is	supportive and peace-oriented	Attributive
4.	The Afghan opposition's effort	is	a peaceful attempt for reform	Attributive
5.	Islamabad's stance	should be	neutral and non-partisan	Attributive

Table 12. Relational Process

The relational process in this text highlights the current political, social, and ethical circumstances of the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The author uses attributive clauses to create a contrast between the unrest in Afghanistan and the calmness of Pakistan's diplomatic roles. The narrative presents Pakistan as responsible and peace-seeking, whereas the Afghan government is portrayed as ineffectual and unfair. This kind of linguistic structuring is consistent with van Dijk's (1998) theory that relational discourse structures, which distinguish between self and other in political texts, influence ideological positioning.

Excerpt	Sayer	Verbal Process	Verbiage / Receiver	Type
1.	Afghan civil society activists	submitted	statement/opinion	Report
2.	Pakistan	expressed support	Afghans/readers	Statement

Table 13. Verbal Process

The editorial's verbal procedures demonstrate how actors convey their stances, beliefs, and instructions. It is implied that Afghan civil society activists actively participate in influencing audiences and forming discourse by sharing their political submissions. In the same vein,

Pakistan's declaration of solidarity with Afghans shows a formal position and communication with readers both at home and abroad. These verbal processes show the ability of language to establish authority and legitimacy in a political setting by emphasizing communication, compromise, and the dissemination of ideologies supported by Wodak (2001), who highlights that institutional discourse functions through speech acts that solidify ideological and political authority.

Excerpt	Existential Element	Process	Existent	Circumstance
1.	There	is	a foregone conclusion	about Kabul government
2.	There	has been	societal discord	in Pakistan

Table 14. Existential Process

Existential processes concentrate on the existence or presence of social factors. Some events, including the ineffectiveness of the Kabul government and the social unrest in Pakistan brought on by the pressures of refugees, are presented in the editorial as facts. These existential claims highlight conditions and facts that set the stage for political action. The text emphasizes the larger social and political environment in which players operate by bringing attention to issues, repercussions, and environmental elements.

- **Interpersonal Metafunction**

Excerpt	Mood Type	Modality	Function in Discourse
The Afghan civil society activists were able to further their envelope	Declarative	Low ability	Highlights the agency of Afghan activists and their limited yet effective participation
It will be a bad math to host the Afghan opposition	Declarative	Medium probability	Warns the reader about possible negative outcomes of Pakistan's involvement
Pakistan has always been supportive of Afghans	Declarative	High certainty	Reinforces Pakistan's consistent humanitarian stance
Islamabad would be well advised to stay aloof	Declarative	Medium recommendation	Advises the state to maintain neutrality in Afghan affairs
Their endeavour to bring change through peaceful pressure tactics is laudable	Declarative	High certainty	Positively evaluates the Afghan activists' peaceful political efforts

Table 15. Mood and Modality Pattern

The editorial's interpersonal analysis shows that the author mostly uses declarative mood clauses with an educational tone rather than a combative tone. By making declarative claims, the editorial presents itself as a voice that offers opinions and suggestions regarding Pakistan's political approach towards Afghanistan. A balanced combination of cautious assumption and confident appraisal is indicated by the modality used throughout, which ranges from low to high. High-certainty modals, for example, reaffirm Pakistan's continuous support for Afghanistan, while medium-probability modals voice worries about possible political fallout. A persuasive element is added by using recommendations of medium strength, which gently direct policymakers without

coming out as authoritarian. The text's interpersonal decisions uphold a tone of diplomatic responsibility and reasonable prudence, promoting neutrality. This method is a perfect example of Halliday's (1994) idea of interpersonal meaning, according to which the modality conveys the writer's degree of dedication and the reader-writer relationship.

• **Textual Metafunction**

Excerpt	Theme	Rheme	Type of Theme
The assembling of Afghan opposition luminaries in Islamabad made headlines	The assembling of Afghan opposition luminaries in Islamabad	made headlines as they sought permission for furthering their political activities	Topical
It is a foregone conclusion that the government in Kabul is inconclusive	It	is a foregone conclusion that the government in Kabul is inconclusive and has not delivered on its promises	Topical
Yet, it will be a bad math to host the Afghan opposition	Yet, it	will be a bad math to host the Afghan opposition by letting them open their political offices in Pakistan	Textual + Topical
Their endeavour to bring change through peaceful pressure tactics is laudable	Their endeavour to bring change through peaceful pressure tactics	is laudable and could lead to democratic evolution	Topical
Pakistan has always been supportive of Afghans	Pakistan	has always been supportive of Afghans and strived for peace	Topical
Thus, Islamabad would be well advised to stay aloof	Thus, Islamabad	would be well advised to stay aloof from internal Afghan politics	Textual + Topical

Table 16. Theme and Rheme Pattern

The textual analysis of this editorial shows that the author mostly used topical themes, concentrating on the important players rather than the minor details. These unmarked themes give the editorial a factual and objective tone, aligning with the informational nature of the text. The presence of textual themes like connectives facilitates the smoothness from one argument to another; similarly, occasionally marked themes highlight the critical observation and evaluation aspects.

SFL Analysis of Newspaper’s Headlines

• **Ideational Metafunction**

Newspaper	Headline	Process Type	Process	Actor / Carrier	Goal / Phenomenon / Attribute
Dawn	Flood threat remains severe at rivers’ confluence	Relational	remains	Flood threat	severe at rivers’ confluence
Dawn	Pakistan signals support for united anti-Israel front	Material	signals	Pakistan	support for united anti-Israel front
Dawn	Airspace ban on Indian aircraft extended	Material	extended	— (implicit government actor)	airspace ban on Indian aircraft
Dawn	Pentagon chief Hegseth gives top generals ‘dressing down’	Material	gives	Pentagon chief Hegseth	top generals ‘dressing down’
Dawn	Future conflict will lead to ‘cataclysmic devastation’, army warns India	Material (projected verbal clause)	warns	army	India (receiver) + projected clause (‘will lead...’)
Dawn	Govt set to ink IMF deal after ‘flood adjustments’	Material	set to ink	Govt	IMF deal
The Express Tribune	Deluge ebbs but ordeal surges	Material	ebbs / surges	Deluge / ordeal	—
The Express Tribune	Pakistan–KSA Accord redraws security maps	Material	redraws	Pakistan–KSA Accord	security maps
The Express Tribune	Afghan footprints deepen in Pakistan TTP attacks	Material	deepen	Afghan footprints	in Pakistan TTP attacks
The Express Tribune	AJK reels: 9 killed in protest violence	Material	killed	—	9 people
The Express Tribune	Neighbours discuss joint Afghan approach	Verbal	discuss	Neighbours	joint Afghan approach
The Express Tribune	Fragile peace dawns over Gaza	Material	dawns	Fragile peace	over Gaza

Table 17. Ideational Metafunction of Headlines

Both *Dawn* and *The Express Tribune*’s headlines mostly use the material process, which indicates moments, actions, and current events in both domestic and foreign affairs. This reflects in the

newspaper, which emphasizes presenting news as a series of dynamic events rather than unchanging states. For example, *Dawn's* headlines like "Pakistan signals support for united anti-Israel front" and "Govt set to ink IMF deal after 'flood adjustments'" highlight Pakistan's active participation in regional and international affairs and illustrate institutional agency and political decision-making. Similarly, *The Express Tribune* makes extensive use of material verbs like "redraws," "deepens," and "dawns." The use of action-oriented terminology is common, which is consistent with Mohammed's (2016) findings that political reporting emphasizes agency and power through material processes. This demonstrates the newspaper's focus on presenting development, crisis, and recovery, often using striking, metaphorical language that heightens the news's emotional effect and immediacy.

On the other hand, relational process foregrounds persistence over change, as "Flood threat remains severe" is employed to depict ongoing conditions. These tendencies are consistent with the findings of Ismayatim et al. (2018), who pointed out that relational clauses are employed in news language to build present states and reflect the press's position towards recurrent events. By placing readers in the context of continuing issues rather than isolated incidents, these headlines create a tone of severity and caution. As a whole, both newspapers strategically employ transitivity choices: *The Express Tribune* combines dynamism and imagery to engage readers both intellectually and emotionally, whereas *Dawn* places a higher priority on institutional authority and factual action. This supports the notion provided forth by Halliday (1994) that ideational meanings serve to describe world experiences through individuals, processes, and situations.

• **Interpersonal Metafunction**

Newspaper	Headline	Mood Type	Modality	Function in Discourse
Dawn	Flood threat remains severe...	Declarative	---	Statement of condition / warning
Dawn	Pakistan signals support...	Declarative	---	Diplomatic stance
Dawn	Airspace ban... extended	Declarative (passive)	---	Factual policy report
Dawn	Pentagon chief gives...	Declarative	---	Reported disciplinary action
Dawn	Future conflict will lead...	Declarative	High modality (will)	Prediction / warning
Dawn	Govt set to ink...	Declarative	Medium modality (set to)	Future intention
The Express Tribune	Deluge ebbs but ordeal surges	Declarative	---	Contrast of recovery and suffering

The Express Tribune	Pakistan–KSA Accord redraws...	Declarative	---	Strategic shift
The Express Tribune	Afghan footprints deepen...	Declarative	---	Cautionary / critical
The Express Tribune	AJK reels... 9 killed...	Declarative (elliptical)	---	Humanitarian crisis
The Express Tribune	Neighbours discuss...	Declarative	---	Diplomatic cooperation
The Express Tribune	Fragile peace dawns...	Declarative (metaphorical)	Low modality (hopeful)	Cautious optimism

Table 18. Interpersonal Metafunction of Headlines

Interpersonally, both *Dawn* and *The Express Tribune* rely on declarative mood, which upholds objectivity, credibility, and a formal tone characteristic of journalistic language. Declarative mood reinforces the purpose to inform rather than convince. For instance, by concentrating on facts and official actions without offering an opinion, headlines such as "Airspace ban on Indian aircraft extended" or "Pentagon chief gives top generals 'dressing down'" convey authority and impartiality. In several instances, *Dawn* uses a modality to convey prediction or optimism, such as "Future conflict will lead to 'cataclysmic devastation'" or "Govt set to ink IMF deal." Noel (2020) indicated that newspaper writers employ grammatical structures and modality to communicate authority while preserving concision and reader engagement, which is consistent with these language choices. This establishes the paper as a reliable predictor of events that are likely to occur. Readers' perception of urgency and likelihood are subtly influenced by deliberate use of modality, which adds to the element of expectations. *The Express Tribune*, on the other hand, frequently uses figurative language and emotive contrasts, such as "Deluge ebbs but ordeal surges" and "Fragile peace dawns over Gaza." These selections provide the headlines' emotional resonance while retaining their factual foundation, encouraging empathy and awareness. These interpersonal decisions help *Dawn* maintain an institutional, aloof voice while *The Express Tribune* engages readers with a more sympathetic, humane tone, both of which strengthen their editorial identities in Pakistani media.

• **Textual Metafunction**

Newspaper	Headline	Theme	Rheme	Theme Type
Dawn	Flood threat remains severe...	Flood threat	remains severe at rivers' confluence	Topical
Dawn	Pakistan signals support...	Pakistan	signals support for united anti-Israel front	Topical
Dawn	Airspace ban on Indian aircraft extended	Airspace ban on Indian aircraft	extended	Topical
Dawn	Pentagon chief Hegseth gives...	Pentagon chief Hegseth	gives top generals 'dressing down'	Topical

Dawn	Future conflict will lead...	Future conflict	will lead to 'cataclysmic devastation'	Topical
Dawn	Govt set to ink IMF deal...	Govt	set to ink IMF deal after 'flood adjustments'	Topical
The Express Tribune	Deluge ebbs but ordeal surges	Deluge/ordeal	ebbs/surges	Multiple topical themes
The Express Tribune	Pakistan–KSA Accord redraws...	Pakistan–KSA Accord	redraws security maps	Topical
The Express Tribune	Afghan footprints deepen...	Afghan footprints	deepen in Pakistan TTP attacks	Topical
The Express Tribune	AJK reels...	AJK	reels: 9 killed in protest violence	Topical
The Express Tribune	Neighbours discuss joint Afghan approach	Neighbours	discuss joint Afghan approach	Topical
The Express Tribune	Fragile peace dawns over Gaza	Fragile peace	dawns over Gaza	Topical (metaphorical)

Table 19. Textual Metafunction of Headlines

Textually, headlines in both newspapers exhibit different theme-rheme organization techniques that influence the way information is ranked and understood. Themes like "Pakistan," "Govt," and "Flood threat" highlight national issues and institutional actors in *Dawn*, presenting the news through a prism of transparency and governance. While rhemes provide the fresh or vital information that completes the message, the thematic focus on collective entities assures consistency and enhances a sense of authority. With this organization, *Dawn's* reputation for direct, policy-focused journalism that prioritizes order and clarity is consistent. The headlines of *The Express Tribune*, on the other hand, usually use multiple or allegorical themes, as in "Deluge ebbs but ordeal surges" and "Fragile peace dawns over Gaza." These thematic arrangements align with Busa (2013), who claimed that by structuring meaning and framing reader perception within constrained textual space, headline structure serves two purposes: communicative and persuasive. In addition to serving as a thematic element, the metaphorical language serves as an interpretive framework that encourages readers to consider political and humanitarian concerns from a more introspective, emotional standpoint. Therefore, *The Express Tribune* creates complex themes that both inform and emotionally engage its readership, whilst *Dawn* stresses linear thematic clarity to enlighten readers. This illustrates how thematic structure adds to each newspaper's distinct discourse nature.

Discussion

The analysis of the newspaper data, which consists of *Dawn* and *The Express Tribune* editorial pieces and headlines, sheds light on the language techniques and process types to convey both local and global geopolitical events. The study examined how language creates meaning, depicts social actors, and places readers ideologically using Halliday's SFL framework, with a focus on transitivity, mood, modality, and theme–rheme structures. Patterns in the coverage of both

newspapers were found by focusing on the distribution of process types, mood selections, and thematic groupings.

In *Dawn*, material processes were the most common, followed by mental, verbal, relational, and existential. Smith (2017) describes that SFL research finds that material processes are prominent in news reporting. That means *Dawn* has a strong emphasis on acts, decisions, and occurrences. While verbal process reports comments and directives from political actors. Relational process identifies moral judgment and identity positioning. Predictive statements such as "Future conflict will lead to cataclysmic devastation" frequently employ declarative mood, with high or medium modality, which upholds authority, objectivity, and the newspaper's reputation as a reliable information source. *The Express Tribune*, on the other hand, has also used material process as a dominant feature, but the newspaper also extensively used metaphorical and multiple themes as seen in headlines "Deluge ebbs but ordeal surges" and "Fragile peace dawns over Gaza". The newspaper attempts to strike a fair balance between factual reporting and reader engagement, which prioritizes human experiences and emotional resonance. While relational processes create ideological positioning and communication authority, editorial mental processes emphasize observation, cognition, and evaluation. Low-modality clauses and evaluative sentences express cautious optimism and sympathetic engagement with the listener. Comparison between newspapers reveals that *Dawn* gives a more organized narrative by emphasizing the linear authority of events with distinct topical topics like "Pakistan," "Govt," and "Flood threat." However, *The Express Tribune* presents events with their societal and moral implications by accentuating dynamic contrasts and figurative language. This strategy of news highlights the point that newspapers create social reality by maintaining material and relational processes while emotionally involving the reader.

One notable finding in support of the impersonal and event-focused character of journalistic discourse is the lack of behavioral process in the data under analysis. The editorials and headlines under examination completely omit behavioral processes, which usually stand for physiological or psychological expressions of human behavior, including watching, listening, or reacting. This omission suggests that the newspapers place a higher priority on social, political, and institutional actions than on the experiences or feelings of specific people. The authors distance the discussion from subjective human involvement by avoiding behavioral expressions, maintaining an air of authority and objectivity. Since formal and informal registers place more emphasis on action and event than on the internal state that supports these events. his pattern supports Halliday's (1994) claim that behavioral processes are less common in these types of texts. Additionally, the absence of behavioral representation reinforces the claim made by Fowler (1991) that news discourse creates reality by emphasizing material and communal action over individual human agency through selected linguistic choices. This absence supports print media's objective and fact-based reporting style.

The results of this research validate the importance of material process in news. By offering assessment, perception, and communication, relational, mental, and verbal processes support material acts and help to establish social and ideological meaning. Depending on the subject, modality, and mood, choices can support authority, objectivity, or empathy, while theme-rheme organization patterns in the text preserve coherence and help readers navigate sociopolitical tales.

Conclusion

The analysis revealed that verbal and material processes predominated, suggesting a journalistic emphasis on events, acts, and reported speech. In keeping with the impersonal and objective tone

of news discourse, behavioral processes were completely absent, whereas mental and relational processes were less common. According to interpersonal analysis, the media's authoritative and informative role was highlighted by the declarative mood of reporting, while the modality seemed to be used selectively to convey caution. The regular application of subject themes in the textual analysis ensured coherence and clarity in the information delivery. The regular application of subject themes in the textual analysis ensured coherence and clarity in the information delivery. The overall linguistic choices made by both publications imply that Pakistani media maintain neutrality while gently influencing readers' perceptions of political and social reality through factual depiction, careful assessment, and coherent structure.

Future Recommendations

Future research may expand by analyzing the linguistic distinction between English and local media discourses by comparing headlines and editorials. This research is limited to a qualitative design within the framework of SFL. Future research could adopt the mixed-method design by incorporating quantitative frequency analysis or corpus linguistics techniques. Additionally, the researcher can also conduct a diachronic change of language use in political reporting.

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