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AN ECOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF FLOOD FRAMING IN SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPER REPORTS

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ABSTRACT

Ecolinguistic researches unearth the deeply embedded linguistic choices in discourses utilized to address ecological issues. One particular way to achieve this is through the analysis of frames. Frames centre on the various ways ecological events are portrayed which reveal and influence the perceptions and reactions towards them. This present study therefore, carries out an ecolinguistic analysis of the framing of flood events in the 2018-2021 publications of five Nigerian National Newspapers. Using insights from Frame Analysis theory and Ecolinguistic Framework for Frame Analysis, the twenty purposively sampled data were given a qualitative analysis revealing how the concept of flooding as well as its problem solution is framed. The results reveal that, inferences from the SOURCE FRAMES of ANGRY BEING, LANDLORD, EMPLOYER, ECONOMIC VALUE, PROJECTILE, PURPOSIVE MOVEMENT, etc. have been adopted to describe flooding and its activities. The different actors' perceptions of flooding through these frames evoke the urgency and necessity required to solve the problem. It is concluded in this research that, the use of such flood frames in these newspapers aptly capture the perception of flooding and its activities in Nigeria, which is capable of influencing the needed positive reactions and actions towards flood control, management as well as environmental protection in general.

KEYWORDS:

Ecolinguistics, Language, Framing, Frame Analysis, Flooding, Newspaper Reports and Environmental Protection.



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BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Ecolinguistics critiques the different forms of language use in discourses on environmental issues, and by extension ecological discourses. It explores “the more general patterns of language that influence how people both think about, and treat the world” (Stibbe, 2015:1). Language influences how individuals conceptualize and think about the environment they live in. Language co-ordinates human activities, therefore, it has consequences on human interactions amongst fellow humans, amongst other species and also with the environment. Such interactions could contribute to the protection or to the destruction of the ecology. Ecological linguistics thus seeks to promote those narratives which help to sustain the environment rather than to destroy it. Researches in ecolinguistics lead to lucid comprehension of how valuable language is in experiencing our world and understanding the ideologies that shape the society we live in. Approaches to ecolinguistics analysis include examining the ideologies, the metaphors, the frames and varieties of other cognitive and linguistic phenomena. Any of these perspectives to ecolinguistics analysis uncovers stories, frames, narratives and myths which shape the way people react towards ecological events. The uncovered stories are usually filled with narratives which are in accordance to the dictates of the voices inherent in such narratives. Language use therein is often framed and re-framed to achieve this. Readers are exposed to these framings and narratives, and unconsciously think about them, believe and react accordingly.

These narratives otherwise referred to as myths (Midgley, 2011:1), paradigms (Robertson, 2014:54), stories (Stibbe, 2015:6), are indirectly infused in between lines in texts which are circulated in a given society. They are evidenced in media reports which are sources of dominant perspectives. Just as Ezeifeka postulates, “the choice of words, the grammatical constructions and the meanings conveyed by the media have a significant role to play on how the particular discursive event is to be framed” (2013:174). Framing thus as an ecolinguistics analytical framework presents us with the various ways ecological events are communicated to influence how we reason about nature. As opined by Stibbe (2015:48), framing is a “cognitive imposition of a story from one area of life onto another area”. By implications, frames from a familiar area of life can be adopted to make an unfamiliar area more comprehensible. Through it, text creators inform their audience what and how to think about a particular issue (Davie, 2011). They project special attributes to be seen or felt about such phenomenon. Just as McComba and Shaw (2016) assert, frames are those pronounced attributes of certain issues, events or happenings in the message communicated. Different frames tell different stories about how nature is perceived; how ecological events are interpreted and thus projected. They can be used to preserve nature or to destroy it. Just as Entman posits, frames can “diagnose, evaluate and prescribe” (1993:53), consequently, they are valuable tools and frameworks with which to conduct researches in ecolinguistics. It is against this background that, this study investigates how ecological issues are framed in selected Nigerian Newspapers’ reports. It narrowed its search to flood discourses as it sought to uncover the role of language, under the framework of framing, in the evaluation of flood event and possible solution to flooding, a persistent ecological issue in Nigeria.

This study is expected to encourage and justify the need for cross fertilization of ideas, methodologies and theoretical frameworks which are the hallmark of interdisciplinary researches. In addition, this study, by achieving the foundational objectives of ecolinguistics, would contribute to environmental sustainability. By implication, the audience consciousness on the severity of climate crisis would be awakened, and thus contribute to their possible solution. Again, it would be part of the literature that popularized and gave ecolinguistics a defining meaning.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- a. The study identifies the various flood frames in the selected newspaper reports on flooding.
- b. It analyses their impact on people's perception and reaction towards flood.
- c. It establishes their contribution towards the solution of flooding in Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- a. What are the various flood frames in the selected newspaper reports on flooding?
- b. How has such use of frames impacted people's perception and reaction towards flood?
- c. How has the use of these frames contributed to the solution of flooding in Nigeria?

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Ecolinguistics: An Overview

Any account of the earliest development of ecolinguistics would be incomplete without a reference to Einar Haugen and Michael Halliday. Haugen is an American linguist whose ecological perspective as put forth in his seminal talk on "The Ecology of Language" in 1970, heralded arrays of questions on the interactions between language and its environment. In this work, which was also published with the same title in 1972 (Le Vasseur, 2014:2), Haugen hinted that language is a larger part of the environment and therefore cannot be separated from it. He X-rayed the symbiotic relationship between language and ecology and stressed the need for studies in ecology of language and language of ecology.

By 1990, Haugen's ecological direction to linguistics birthed ecolinguistics following another key note paper titled 'New Ways of Meaning: The Challenge to Applied Linguistics'. This was delivered by Michael K. Halliday at the 9th World Conference of Applied Linguistics held at Thessaloniki (Dash, 2019a:380). Halliday's contribution to the field of ecolinguistics raised questions on how linguistic patterns have contributed to the perception of environmental issues as positive or as negative in texts. His seminal note is noted to birth critical inquiries which led to the emergence of ecolinguistics. Halliday's tradition encouraged linguists to care about the environment where language exists, and ensure that language use in an environment impacts positively in sustaining such environment. By so doing, his quest for linguists to join biologist and environmentalists to protect the environment will be achieved. Ecolinguistics thus is birthed to study language ecology, analyze texts which are about environmental or ecological issues, as well as project the role of language in such discourses.

Again, the 21st century study of ecolinguistics also must refer to Prof. Arran Stubbe whose contributions to the field are highly noteworthy. Stubbe's seminal book- "Ecolinguistics: Language, ecology and the stories we live by" is a must read for any researcher of ecolinguistics. Stubbe supports the fact that there is a connection between language and ecology, two distinct areas of life. However, he argues that "the link between ecology and language is that how humans treat each other and the natural world is influenced by our thoughts; concepts, ideas, ideologies and world views, and these in turn are shaped through language" (Stubbe, 2015:2).

Stubbe observed in his book that there are fundamental stories we live by which influence how the world is treated, and such stories should be retold if they contribute negatively to environmental sustainability. Ecolinguistic researchers investigate these "stories we live by, mental models that influence behavior and lie at the heart of the ecological challenges we are facing" (Ibid: 1-2). By so doing, those stories which contribute to the destruction of the environment are revealed, criticized and replaced with new ones which promote them. Consequently, Stubbe is of the view that ecolinguistics

is “about critiquing forms of language, that contribute to ecological destruction and aiding in the search for new forms of language that inspire people to protect the natural world” (2015:1).

Ecolinguistics has been defined by various researchers. On the one hand, Dash (2019a:382) defined it as “an applied linguistics that studies discourses that are either favourable or unfavourable for the sustenance of the Earth”. On the other hand, Alexander and Stibbe equally see it as “the study of the relationship between language and human being, other organisms and the natural environment, with the aim of maintaining the sustainable relationship of living organisms” (2014:3). Apparently, language use impacts the environment and the environment impacts language, therefore language and ecology have a form of symbiosis. Ecolinguistics also studies language according to the environment in which it is used (Derni, 2008.). Such studies reveal how language contributes to the possible solution of ecological problems. From the foregoing, this research posits that ecolinguistics is the study of environmental discourses from the critical perspective of how language has been employed to tell different stories about nature, environment and ecological issues. By critical perspective, we mean critiquing the language use in environmental discourses, analyzing how constructive or destructive they are to nature and all that depends on nature. More so, this entails analyzing how text creators project environmental issues in such a manner that their ideologies are conveyed through their narratives which may induce subtle persuasion of the audience targeted, to react in their desired manner.

Ecolinguistic research “analyses linguistic texts or discourses from the ecological perspectives... sources and resources including advertising or commercials, (un) sustainable development, climate change, ecological conservation, ecosystems (e.g. lakes, rivers etc.), environmental issue, greenification of deserts and desertification of greenery, and production of energy/alternate sources of energy from unsustainable materials (e.g. solid waste) as well as consumption patterns in society” (Dash, 2019b:256). As a field of study, it explores the role of language in the continuous harmonious interactions between humans and their physical/social environment. It seeks to address ecological happening from climate change and biodiversity loss, to environmental justices and natural disasters. Language communicates these environmental issues and as such provides data for research analysis.

A cursory study of various definitive discourses on ecolinguistics led Bang and Trampe (2013) to categorize approaches to ecolinguistics research into two. The first is the understanding of “theories of language inspired by a holistic paradigm of ecology” (2013:1). The second is the use of linguistic analytical tools to investigate ecological texts and discourses. The latter is what is explored in this research. Nevertheless, ecolinguistics as an emerging discipline is faced with “theoretical stability and methodological clarity” (Le Vasseur, 2014:1). There is no one approach to its study, thus it borrows its methodological and theoretical insights from diverse disciplines. Concepts, theories, frameworks and methods are often borrowed from cognitive linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and critical metaphor analysis and so on, to conduct ecolinguistic researches. This has attracted criticisms from scholars for many consider it a problem with ecolinguistic studies. However, studies (Stibbe, 2015; Robertson, 2014; Stibbe, 2012 and Muhlhausler, 2003) have discovered that the discipline has a lot to offer in its quest for a better understanding of the relationship between language, human being and the environment in which the trio exist.

An environment defines language; similarly, language sustains an environment. Language can construct or destruct the environment in which it exists. Ecolinguistics frameworks look out for stories, paradigms, myths, narratives which are at the heart of ecological crisis we face, which seem to contribute to fueling or solving the crisis. Just like Stibbe submits, “it is through language that the

natural world is mentally reduced to objects or resources to be conquered, and it is through language that people can be encouraged to respect and care for the systems that supports life” (2015:2). Researches in ecolinguistics focus on how language has been employed to construct these stories at the heart of ecological crisis. These stories which are mental models that we are unconsciously exposed to, influence the way we behave and act towards ecological problems. They are often told and retold in a particular way. One of them is through the technique of framing, which according to Stibbe is an analytical framework to look out for in ecological discourse analysis.

The Concept of Frame/Framing in Ecolinguistics

Frame as a concept in language should not be discussed without reference to Charles Fillmore. It was introduced in linguistics through Fillmore in the middle of 1970 (Ungerer and Schmid, 2006). His earliest conception of frame saw it being situated within the purview of semantic analysis as well as syntactic patterns. This led to his definition of it as cited in the above source, as “any system of linguistic choices - the earliest cases being collections of words but also including choices of grammatical rules or linguistic categories - that can get associated with prototypical instances of scenes” (209). However, the later publications of Fillmore (1985) and Fillmore and Atkins (1992) took it from array of choices of linguistic category to cognitive perception. It was thus conceived as being made up of cognitive structures where certain choice of words in discussing a phenomenon evokes cognitive realities. The implication here is that frame, as a concept in ecolinguistics has an interdisciplinary interface. From the cognitive linguistics perspective, frames can therefore be interpreted in ecolinguistic researches. Cognitive linguistics studies the relationship between language and the cognitive system. By extension, it looks at using language to evoke specific models and experiences in the mind of the reader/audience, i.e., evoke cognitive realities. Fillmore thus regards frame as “specified unified frameworks of knowledge or coherent schematizations of experience” (1985:222).

Frames are also regarded as “mental structures that allow human beings to understand reality – and sometimes to create what we take to be reality” (Lakoff, 2006:25). The linguistic choices we make in language use depend on “what attracts our attention” (Ungerer and Schmid, 2006:210) and the kind of reality we would wish to create. For instance, the above authors postulate that, in describing a commercial event, the choice of the verb ‘buy’ is made when the text creator wishes to direct the audience attention to the BUYER. Similarly, the verb-sellis used to redirect attention to the SELLER/GOODS. These choices made are dependent on what attracted our attention. Perhaps, this informs Stibbe’s definition of frame as “a story about an area of life that is brought to mind by particular trigger words” (2015:47). The function of the trigger words is to make prominent an aspect of communication. In this, frame has thus been referred to as the act which guides text producers “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item prescribed” (Entman, 1993:53).

Frames manifest in words, metaphors, storylines and imageries, and are used to evaluate, diagnose and prescribe events to induce reactions. Frames are used to elicit attention and thus are veritable tools in media communication especially the Nigerian newspapers. Ecolinguistics explores the patterns of language use in ecological discourses which influence how humans conceptualize and treat the environment. Frames constitute an aspect of these patterns. Different frames “tell very different stories about how the world is, or should be in the future” (Stibbe, 2015:47). A critical study of the foregoing in relation to ecological discourses reveals that there are certain trigger words adopted to make prominent ecological issues and problems which create their awareness. They are

replete in these different ecological stories, and are what this present study looks out for. The trigger words also understood as frames “call up attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements which may promote different reactions in audiences” (Nerlich and Koteyko, 2009:209).

The use of frames in discourses guides newspaper text creators in framing certain realities. Framing is a technical term often used across disciplines, thus it connotes varying degree of meaning and interpretation. Its notation in linguistics is what is explored in this paper. According to Stibbe, framing is using “a story from one area of life (a frame) to structure how another area of life is conceptualized” (2015:47). As a cognitive structure, the author further postulates that, it is “the cognitive imposition of a story from one area of life onto another area” (2015:48) which happens by the use of trigger words from one area of life to describe a different area of life. Studies in ecolinguistics see to it that, stories are constantly framed and reframed to contribute to the solutions of ecological issues and ecological sustainability. For this reason, the above source posits that, reframing provides new structures for conceptualizing a particular area of life which had been framed in a specific way. As applied in this study, framing refers to the act of adopting a story from a specific area of life, made possible by the use of specialized words in such area to structure how another area of life is conceptualized with the aim of projecting a particular reality of life. While frames constitute those trigger words adopted from a particular domain to explore stories in another domain for lucid comprehension. The act of framing and reframing of stories are bound by the culture and context of language use, and the environment. They are therefore culture and context dependent.

Framing and reframing techniques are usually deployed with specific intent of the writer. They are used to present in a particular light existing stories, concepts, narratives or notions to the target audience so as to achieve the desired effect. Framing and reframing comes with an intention which the actors wish to realize. On the one hand, they can be used to create awareness, bring the attention of the target audience to an existing story/ issue. On the other hand, they can also be employed to expose a particular problem, the failure of a system with the intention of solving or nipping the problem in the bud. For instance, to frame climate change as a failure of markets implies that the target is that, market entrepreneurs, economists and businesses should take the lead in addressing the problem. In the same way, framing it as a challenge to individual and corporate morality signals the need for different cohorts of actors to be mobilized, (Hulme, 2009). This is why this study postulates that, it is the purview of ecolinguistics studies to create and recreate stories about the ecological issues and challenges we are facing with the aim of influencing behaviour which would address them. Using language in framing and reframing of the narratives we live by helps us to get along with our natural environment.

It has been evidenced in this review that framing is a very important device in eliciting attention and inducing reactions as they occur. To this end, it is a vital tool in the hands of literary writers, politicians, advertisers as well as journalists. For discourses on ecological issues, frames, framing and reframing are veritable tools for communication, thus ecolinguistics enquiries find them as researchable concepts in ecological discourses.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Frames, framing and reframing are concepts that are used interdisciplinarily viz-a-viz cognitive science (Lakoff, 2004), linguistics (Jannen, 1993), sociology (Goffman, 1974) and so on. The major preoccupation of the adoption in these disciplines is to induce specific kind of behaviour, attitude and perception towards a particular phenomenon. In ecolinguistics, their utmost importance is projected since the concepts are frequently deployed by various organizations and personalities working towards social change as well as ecological sustenance. They are thus used to achieve the

desired and required social and ecological change. For instance, Blackmore and Holmes (2013), in their research studied the framing of nature in online materials from the conservation charities. They discovered that these conservation organizations depicted nature as something to be cared for; to be protected. They used transactional frames made prominent by what the researchers called metaphor key words otherwise referred to as frames. There are frames like ‘discounts’, ‘shopped’ and ‘customer’ used to talk about the need to save nature. The researchers argued that, the use of such frames suggest that they can save nature when they shopped and offer 10% discount to conservation organizations. Although they are critical of this, because they opine that, these frames present the conservation charity as a business venture which might induce an undesired reaction.

In the same way, Christmas, et al (2013) investigated the UK Government and Non-Governmental Organizations’ (NGOs) use of frames to explicate the communication of biodiversity issues. The researchers brought to the fore the projection of nature with these lines – ‘humanity finds a way’, ‘humanity can’t keep up’. In their criticism, they posit that, that humanity finds a way suggests that humanity can do without the services of nature. They therefore suggest that such framing need to be replaced with more successful biodiversity frames. Again, Blackmore and Holmes (2013:43) suggested the “replacement of the Red Tape challenge used to frame nature conservation with ‘Green Foundation frames’”. These researchers opine that such type of frame places the short term interests of businesses over environmental concerns.

In Crompton (2019), the concept of framing was applied to social and ecological issues. However, the research criticized the different environmental campaigns which aimed at using frames which promote financial success and saving money. It maintains that, such campaigns may re-enforce those values which have hitherto contributed to ecological destruction. Therefore, it advocates that, text producers should avoid frames which promote extrinsic values such as the above. Stibbe explicated the concept of extrinsic value which was demonstrated with this extract from the ‘Red, a carbon reduction initiative’.

No cost, just savings! Just unplugging things when you’re not using them can help us reach the (red 60% challenge...) Fit low energy bulbs where you can. For an initial outlay of just E7 for each bulb, you will save about 80kg CO₂ and E10 on your electricity bill... (sic).

Remember if it reduces the energy you need, it will reduce the CO₂ that you are responsible for and it will also make you richer. Just imagine what you could treat yourself to with all that money you won’t be spending on your energy! (2015:50).

In the above extract, there are two values being promoted. The first which is the point of the campaign encourages the reduction in carbon emissions which impacts positively on the environment. While the second value projected are the financial gains in reducing carbon emissions. The use of the trigger words in the extract as ‘richer’, ‘save’, ‘savings’, ‘treat yourself’, signals the financial gain frame and consumerist frame as put forward by Stibbe here. In this, the extrinsic value has been highlighted more than the major point which is on carbon emission reduction (the intrinsic value). Therefore, Stibbe argues that, “the common cause report... proposes caution in the selection of frames to ensure that intrinsic goals are highlighted rather than the extrinsic goals which caused ecological damage in the first place” (Ibid). By implication, in ecological discourses, aspects which promote intrinsic values should be emphasized, while those for extrinsic value should be downplayed. However, from our perspective here, the use of such frames in the above discourse is for specific purpose. It is to

persuade the target audience to behave in a particular way. Without the use of such frames which appeal to their pocket, they would not abide by rules which would curtail carbon emission. We thus argue here that, at some points, frames that appeal to people's need should be employed to persuade them to obey certain injunctions. However, care should be taken so that frames which promote these extrinsic values would not be those whose benefits outweigh the benefits of the intrinsic value.

Framing is noted to have a persuasive function. The function is to persuade the audience to interpret/react to issues in a desired manner. This is in consonance with Edward (2005) assertion that framing entails organizing information in a way that a specific interpretation and meaning is projected to an audience. In this light, Ponton, in his research discovered how the UK government White Paper framed an environmental issue. Reading the cover page, the researcher brought to the fore its title – 'The Natural Choice: Securing the value of nature'. He argued that, in the title, **nature is framed "to be institutionalized"; a resource** which needs the controlling and nurturing force of government intervention if its value is to be realized" (2015:4). He asserts that the white paper should have simply read – 'Government White Paper Environment', however, the choice of the other frame is invariably to engage a specific audience and induce a particular reaction.

Furthermore, Ponton, analyzing the texts in the paper, x-rayed the prominence given to the notion of nature's value with the array of positive general statements about the environment. The paper postulates that, the text creators quantified the value of nature which has wide financial, health and economic benefits. The following extracts from the paper illumines this fact.

"Nature is good for human health. There is wealth of evidence on the positive effect that spending time in the natural environment wellbeing of children. The quality of local environment is associated with a decrease in problems such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol. It is also linked with better mental health, reduced stress and more physical activity. If every household in England were provided with good access to quality green space, an estimated E2.1 billion in health care cost could be saved. On the other hand, a poor local natural environment can damage people's health and contribute to health inequalities. For instance, the social costs of the impacts of air pollution are estimated at E16 billion per year in the UK". (Source: The UK Government White Paper cited in Ponton, 2015:4)

The tone of the language in the above discourse reveals the framing of nature's value to a target audience with the aim of encouraging the preservation and care of natural environment. The text creators are able to frame **nature as a resource with immense health/economic value**. They aim to persuade the target audience to think and interpret the natural environment similarly, and as such do the needful in preserving nature. The framing of nature here presupposes that, there is a symbiotic relationship between a good natural environment and our physical health, mental health and emotional wellbeing as well as financial freedom. Our earlier argument in this present research is once more made valid by the above frames. The extrinsic values in form of financial, health and emotional wellbeing have been projected here more than the intrinsic value of nature preservation. Such is not destructive as a gain in one is equal to the other.

Furthermore, Stibbe (2015) explored and identified the framing of **climate change as a security threat**. The use of such keywords/frames as – 'military' and 'security threat' activated the security threat frame. One can then agree with Lakoff's position that "words can be chosen to activate desired frames" (2010:73).

The foregoing in this empirical review buttresses the existence of frame and the use of framing technique in ecological discourses. It has been accounted here that framing techniques are used to elicit awareness of an area of life to achieve a desired motive. At this juncture, this paper surmises that, these researches on framing were carried out on government policy documents, non-governmental organization documents, and online materials on conservation charities; all discourses on nature and climate change. However, it observed that none or little has been done on framing offlooding issues as reported on the Nigerian newspapers. This study therefore, analyzes framing from ecolinguistics perspective as a technique in the newspapers' reports of flooding, a serious ecological issue in Nigeria. It seeks to discover how flooding is framed in the selected print media reports, reasons behind such framing, as well as possible reactions to the issue by appropriate stakeholders. The theory of Framing as well as Stibbe's Ecolinguistics Framework for Framing/Metaphor Analysis would guide the analysis here.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Framing Theory

Framing theory is a theory that has been adopted by various disciplines due to their interconnection which has revealed the current interdisciplinary perspective to researches. It is a theory that evolved in the 1970's under the field of cognitive psychology. It was later recovered into the field of sociology in 1974 by Erving Goffman, where he referred to it as that instrument which allows individuals to maintain a share interpretation of reality. Goffman is noted to put forth the theory under the title - Frame Analysis, and postulated that, the theory "focus on how media draws the public's eye to specific topics" (masscomtheory.com). He further argues that, how a piece of information in the news is presented creates a frame for it. Hence, the above source stated that "framing is the way a communication source defines and constructs a any (sic) piece of information".

Since media communications create instruments which generate frameworks for shared interpretation, the concept was deemed useful for analysis of media discourses. Hence, by 1990, the theory permeated the field of communication and became useful in analyzing media discourses. Framing theory focuses on how a phenomenon conveyed to an audience is presented in a way that, it induces the different choices people make concerning such phenomenon. It analyses frames which influence how a target audience interprets a presented issue. Besides this, it influences the perception and reaction to the issue presented. Frames make prominent an issue or a problem, diagnose it and prescribe its solution or management. No wonder Entman postulated that "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (1993:52). The point to note here is that, in media discourses, an issue or problem is revealed and made prominent using various frames. Frames are thus abstractions which direct attention to a perceived issue/problem, induce a specific reaction to its interpretation and influence a behaviour or attitude towards it.

According to Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) in (masscomtheory.com), framing techniques include: stories (myths/legends), metaphors, slogan/jargon/catchphrase, artifacts, spin, contrast and tradition (rituals/ceremonies). **Metaphor** entails to frame a conceptual idea through comparison to something else. **Slogan/jargon/catchphrase** entails to frame an object with a catchy phrase to make it more memorable and relate-able. **Contrast** entails to describe an object in terms of what it is not. And **spin** entails presenting a concept in such a way as to convey a value judgment (positive/negative) that might not be immediately apparent. Frames are signaled by trigger words which direct attention to specific interpretation.

Frame analysis was later adopted into the field of ecolinguistics. According to Stibbe (2015), in ecolinguistic discourses, there are certain stories which create mental models that influence the way we perceive issues, how we behave and make certain choices concerning the issues. These stories create frames for perceiving such issues and reacting to them accordingly. Ecolinguistic analysis searches the use of frames, narratives, metaphors, stories etc. in ecological discourses which help in constructing realities and inducing specific reactions to such realities. It is against this backdrop, that this research adopted framing theory for its analysis. This theory would also be supported by Stibbe's EFFMA.

Stibbe's Ecolinguistics Framework for Framing/ Metaphor Analysis (EFFMA)

Note that, the terminology- Ecolinguistic Framework for Framing/Metaphor Analysis (EFFMA) is the choice of the researcher, while the content belongs to Stibbe (2015). The tenets of EFFMA are summarized and projected thus:

- ❖ Firstly, metaphors use frames from a specific, concrete and imaginable area of life to structure how a clearly distinct abstract area of life is conceptualized. The source domain as seen in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), for EFFMA is actually made up of frames, thus are labeled Source Frames.
- ❖ Secondly, in EFFMA, there are two conceptual domains. **The source frame and the target domain**, while the source frame relates to something more concrete, specific and imaginable, the target domain relates to an abstract area of life that is distinct from the source frame. The target domain is understood and talked about in terms of the source frame.
- ❖ Thirdly, in EFFMA, to interpret a metaphorical usage, there is a mapping from a source frame (source domain for CMT) to a target domain yielding the expression **TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE FRAME**. Just as Stibbe postulated in his book, "metaphor are a type of framing – one where the source frame is from a specific, concrete and imaginable area of life which is clearly different from the target domain" (2015:65).
- ❖ Furthermore, the mapping is based on the correspondences found in the '**reasoning patterns**' inherent in the target domain and source frame. The reasoning pattern, which is referred to as **metaphorical reasoning** in Lakoff and Johnson's CMT (1980) entails coming to a conclusion about a target domain based on concepts drawn from the source frame which are found to correspond to the target domain. In this, the fourth principle is realized.
- ❖ The fifth principle of EFFMA states that, metaphors structure how certain phenomena and how certain aspects of life are communicated to the public, how they are conceptualized in everyday life as well as how they are acted towards. By implication, in ecological discourses, how certain ecological problems are communicated determines how the world perceives them, and the effect they will have. Certain communication can be inimical to the sustenance of the environment, while others can promote it. To this end, Stibbe advocates positive contribution to environmental protection by ecolinguistic researchers through exposing and rewriting those stories which do not support environmental protection, and supporting those which promotes its protection.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a content analysis research design. The corpora were excerpts from these five daily Nigerian National newspapers: Daily Trust, Punch, Vanguard, Premium Times and the Nations. The focus is on the 2018-2021 news reports on flooding. A total of seventeen excerpts were purposively sampled for the study, and given a qualitative analysis. Frame Analysis Theory as well as Ecolinguistic Framework for Frame and Metaphor Analysis provided the needed theoretical lenses for data interpretation and analysis.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this section, first, we present and analyze our data using insights from Stibbe's Ecolinguistics Framework for Framing and Metaphor Analysis as well as Framing theory. Then, we discuss the findings using concepts from framing theory where we bring forth the different actor groups and their interpretation of flood activities which they portray to the audience.

TABLE 1: PRESENTATION OF THE FLOOD FRAMES ACCORDING TO STIBBE'S SOURCE AND TARGET FRAMEWORK

Just as Stibbe posits, "analyzing framing from an ecolinguistic perspective firstly requires identification of the source frame and the target domain. The target domain is the general area being talked about, while the source frame is a different area of life that is brought to mind through trigger words" as used in the chosen discourses (2015: 52-53). This table specifies our data being categorized under source frame and target domain.

| Source Frames | Target Domains |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Economic Value | Flood Control |
| Angry Being/Villain/Enemy | Flooding |
| War | Flood Control/Activities |
| Purposeful Movement | Flooding |
| Human Being | Flood Activities |
| Container Fluid/Container Substance | Flood Activities |
| Projectile | Flood Activities |
| Landlord/House Owner | Flood Activities |
| Health Challenge | Flood Activities |
| Recurrent Decimal | Flooding |

TABLE 2: PRESENTATION OF DATA COMBINING CONCEPTS FROM FRAMING THEORY AND STIBBE'S FRAMEWORK

| | Key Frames (Source Frames) | Trigger Words | Framing Technique |
|---|----------------------------|--|-------------------|
| 1 | Economic Value | Compensated, Earning, Revenue, Food security, Economic wellbeing | SPIN |
| 2 | Demonic/Angry Being | Kill, rampaging, wreak havoc, destroying, controlling, ravaging/claiming | METAPHOR |
| 3 | War | Battle, combat, tackle/tackling, victims/kill | SPIN/METAPHOR |
| 4 | Purposeful Movement | Coming/come down, entering, move from, recede | METAPHOR |
| 5 | Container Substance | Swallowed, trapped, blocked, disconnected | METAPHOR |
| 6 | Projectile | Impact, hit | METAPHOR |
| 7 | Health Challenge | Paralyses | METAPHOR |
| 8 | Landlord/House Owner | Sacked | METAPHOR |

ANALYSIS OF DATA

1. SOURCE FRAME: PURPOSEFUL MOVEMENT

TARGET DOMAIN: FLOODING

FRAMING TECHNIQUE: METAPHOR

The framing of flooding as a purposeful movement was realized from these excerpts in the newspapers:-

1. ... so if the rainfall that is expected to fall for about six months now falls in four months, the impact will be heavy on the environment. This is because while the earth is trying to take in the one that has **come**, more and more rains **keep coming** within a short period...
(Nnodim, September 5, 2021)
2. Whenever there is rainfall within this basin, it will all concentrate and start **coming** into Nigeria from Guinea, Mali..., the waters all **come down** to Nigeria, **entering** through Kebbi state. And on River Benue side, water **move** from Cameroon to Chad into Nigeria”
(Nnodim, September 5, 2021)

In the above excerpts, flooding is presented by the text creators as that which is on a journey, moving from one location to the other. There is semantic tension in the expressions when we analyze the use of these trigger words – come, coming, entering, move, which are registers of movement, and journey on a larger scale. Drawing insights from these excerpts, the narrative portrays the extreme climate change as a factor causing flooding in Nigeria. Consequently, the image of flooding is framed as that which is triggered by continuous/excessive rainfall which overflows its basin and starts its journey from other African countries to Nigeria. The framing technique here is metaphor. The above suggests various routes flood takes which correspond to movement from one place to another, hence the realization of the framing of flooding as that which is on a purposeful movement.

2. SOURCE FRAME: PROJECTILE

TARGET DOMAIN: FLOOD ACTIVITIES

FRAMING TECHNIQUE: METAPHOR

The framing of flood activities as a Projectile was realized from these excerpts in the newspapers:-

3. ... areas of the state were badly **hit** by the flood... (Nnodium, September 5, 2021)
4. The Director-General, Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA) added that the **impact** of the floods on farmlands had greatly threatened food security. (Agency Report, December 7, 2020).
5. ... wide areas of the country’s north east were **hit** by flooding from late August this year. (Floodlist News, October 27, 2019).

Flooding is interpreted previously as being on a purposeful movement. From the above excerpts, one discovers that when it ‘comes’, the force it usually exerts on its way makes it to be likened to a projectile. A projectile entails being forceful, using force to push an object. The trigger words – ‘hit’ and ‘impact’ belong to the register of projectile and taking as a source frame, it explicates the activities of flood as that which is forceful. In its force, it destroys and pushes down whatever is on its path, be it human beings, farm produce or building, etc.; the force is often times associated with anger. An angry person applies force in what he/she is doing, as if being

possessed by a demon. To this end, this research posits that inferences from the source frame of projectile have been used to describe the activities of flooding, a target domain. The framing technique here is metaphor.

3. SOURCE FRAME: ANGRY/ DEMONIC BEING

TARGET DOMAIN: FLOOD

FRAMING TECHNIQUE: METAPHOR

The framing of flooding as an angry being was realized from these excerpts:-

6. In Ogun state, residents living in flood-prone areas have expressed anxiety, especially as flash floods had **dealt a huge blow** on them in the past, **destroying** property and sometimes **claiming** lives (Moses, July 17, 2021).
7. A statement from the ministry stated that the state government is doing everything possible to ensure that residents are not at risk of **rampaging** flood. (Edozie, Vanguard, 2021).
8. In Jigawa state, flood **claimed** the lives of seven persons. (Aliyu, September 8, 2018).

From the source frame of a being that is demonic and angry, flooding, the target domain has been framed as that which is on a mission to destroy and kill. The highlighted trigger words have been used to portray the activities of flooding by the text producers, using the framing technique of metaphor as proposed by frame analysis theory.

4. SOURCE FRAME: LANDLORD/ EMPLOYER

TARGET DOMAIN: FLOOD

FRAMING TECHNIQUE: METAPHOR

The framing of flooding as a landlord or an employer was realized from this excerpt in the newspaper:-

9. Thousands of residents were said to have been **sacked** from their homes. (Nnodium, September 6, 2021)

In the above excerpt, flood has been equated to the status of a landlord or an employer being capable of ejecting people from their homes/work places. Such framing is metaphorical, thus the expression as used here has evoked the image of a landlord/employer in our conceptual system. The use of the trigger word-sacked- evoked the image of landlord or employer in our cognition. From the source frame of landlord/employer, flood, a target domain has been conceptualized.

5. SOURCE FRAME: CONTAINER FLUID/ SUBSTANCE

TARGET DOMAIN: FLOOD ACTIVITIES

FRAMING TECHNIQUE: METAPHOR

Flood Activities have been framed here as a Container Fluid/Container Substance leading to the realization of Flood Activities as a Container Fluid/ Substance metaphor

10. ... saying that more than 150 households had been **trapped** by flooding. (Aliyu, September 8, 2018).
11. ... over 50 buildings in Omuyibo and Igbagbomi streets have been **swallowed** by the flood. (Nnodium, September 5, 2021)
12. ... said the flood has **disconnected** them from the main town. (Willie, July 17, 2021).

In these excerpts, we see the interpretation of flood as a container substance/fluid. A container presents one with an enclosure or confinement. It could be an object or a substance. Flood has been metaphorically described here as a substance which traps/swallows residents/victims by confining them into a container. It induces a form of disconnection from things outside the confinement. Hence the framing technique is metaphor. Flood gives an abstract line which confines people to a place similar to something being in a container. Consequently, the trigger words – ‘trapped’, disconnected, ‘swallowed’ have been used to activate this frame just as Lakoff (2010) and Stibbe (2015) stipulated. These words call up the framing of container fluid/container substance in the mind of the listeners. The framing in turn heralds the impression of flooding activity as that which can get people stuck to a particular place, be it their homes, work places etc.

6. SOURCE FRAME: HEALTH CHALLENGE

TARGET DOMAIN: FLOOD ACTIVITIES

FRAMING TECHNIQUE: METAPHOR

The framing of Flood Activities as a Health Challenge is deduced from the expression below:

13. Motorists gnash teeth behind wheels as flood **paralyses** part of Benin. (NAN, September 8, 2021)

The source frame identified in the above is a ‘health challenge’ frame which is signaled through the trigger word – paralyses. The word ‘paralyses’ calls to mind a health challenge/ condition caused by a medical issue. There is incongruity in such usage which has caused some sort of semantic tension. However, since framing involves the “cognitive imposition of a story from one area of life onto another area”, (Stibbe, 2015:48), by the use of trigger words from that area, we then argue that ‘paralyses’ with its basic meaning in health register has been metaphorically used as a frame here. Paralysis causes inability to make muscle movement, but has been metaphorically used to connote traffic gridlock where motorists are unable to move to their destination. The frame technique here is metaphor as seen in frame analysis theory. From the source frame of health challenge, the activities of flooding a target domain have been structured.

7. SOURCE FRAME: WAR

TARGET DOMAIN: FLOOD CONTROL

FRAMING TECHNIQUE: METAPHOR

Framing of Flood Control as a War is realized from the expressions below:

14. Meanwhile, the Governor... of Niger state on Thursday approved the release of over ₦60 million for provision of relief materials for **victims** of flood in Mokwa...
15. ... the ministry of environment assured of its preparedness to **combat** the menace

16. The Commissioner for environment and solid minerals Mr... explained that the failure to tackle the problem of flood and erosion... was due to failure of successive government...
17. NEMA prepares to battle floods in 102 LGAS, 28 states... (Omeiza- Vanguard, July 10, 2020)

There is the use of trigger words – ‘combat’, ‘battle’, ‘victims’ and ‘tackle’ which evoke war frame in the cognitive system of readers signaling that flood control is likened to a war situation. The frame techniques here are spin and metaphor. These frames (trigger words) from the source frame of war are adopted to talk about the appropriate party’s concern and involvement in addressing the issue of flooding. The seriousness with which they see the issue of flood led them to liken its control to a war situation where they get ready to ‘battle’, ‘combat’ and ‘tackle’ it. In excerpt 17 for instance, NEMA is seen getting prepared to ‘battle’ flood which calls to mind the physical battle with guns and bullets exposing the semantic incongruity therein. Metaphorically, the idea is to reveal the level of seriousness with which they perceived the issue. The framing thus is aimed at reinforcing their total commitment towards its control.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Government’s Discourse/Framing of Flood

This actor group includes government officials viz-a-viz the president, the governors, local government officials, commissioners, Senate/House of Representative members. Taking as a unit, their framing of flood reveals their perception of its causes and as well as their treatment recommendation. They are presented forthwith.

a. Problem Definition and Causal Interpretation:

Flooding has been situated within several framework of meaning by this actor group. Judging from our extracts, these actors in their narrative framed flooding as an angry demon (exc 12) on ‘rampage’ to claim its victims dead or alive. Consequently, they are prepared to ‘combat’ (exc 10), ‘battle’ (exc 8) this perceived demon. The lexical items ‘combat’ and ‘battle’ adopted from the source frame ‘war’ are used metaphorically to project the government’s readiness to put in place measures both structurally and non-structurally to mitigate the effects of flooding. The citizens/residents are the victims whom the government shows readiness to protect. The framing of flood in the extracts evokes a kind of urgency and necessity on the part of government in solving the issue.

On the other hand, this actor group interpreted nature as another cause of flooding. Increase in rainfall, rise in water level in constructed dams, topography/proximity of state to dams are amongst the nature-related cause. Adopting trigger words as come/coming, move, come down, etc. from the lexical field of movement depicts the conception of flood as that which is on a purposeful movement, revealing the source of the water which causes flooding.

b. Treatment Recommendation/Problem Solution:

Within the government narrative, the solution to flooding comes in terms of building structures as well as rendering social services to victims. To portray their commitment to infrastructural development, the Akwaibom Commissioner is quoted in the media as stating that “we (government) are building an 8.4 kilometer drain that will take water from Atiku Abubakar Avenue up to ... that drainage will carry 50,000 litres of water... (Umo, 2021).

Residents/Victims' Discourse/Framing of Flood

This actor group includes the residents of the communities where flooding takes place.

a. **Problem Definition and Causal Interpretation:**

In their interpretation of flooding and its activities, this group agrees with the government. Both revealed their perception of flooding as an angry demon on a purposeful journey to kill and claim lives. The framing of the causal factors of flooding mirrors that of the government except that, they are equally accusing the government of negligence of duty. In Effiong (2021), the residents of Aba in Abia state are seen to accuse the government as “they said that the 5.6 kilometer drainage built by Abia state government at Ifeobara Basin to pump out storm water... is not functioning, as the basin has been taken over by weeds”.

b. **Treatment Recommendation and Problem Solution:**

The strategy to solve the problem proffered by this group includes both structural and non-structural. While they contribute to the solution by building ‘Monkey Bridge in local parlance’ (Willie, 2021) for those without means of relocating, they equally offer treatment recommendation to the government. They urged the government to dredge Rivers as a permanent solution. More so, there is an appeal to the government to “construct road and drainage to allow for smooth flow of water” (Saleh, 2021).

Government Agency/Experts' Framing of Flood

a. **Problem Definition and Causal Interpretation:**

The actors in this group include the various government parastatals created to assess and manage ecological issues. They are: Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA), National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), FCT Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDP's, Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE). Like the other two groups, this group interpreted the activities of flooding in Nigeria using trigger words from the source frames of War, Projectile, Angry Demon, etc., similarly, their narratives x-rayed several causal factors of flooding. The human related causal factor frames dominated the discourse as put forth by these agencies. For instance, in Davies (2021), the Director General of FEMA is seen to hint that “the flood situation had been worsened by illegal building and blocked drainage channels...” and added that residents should “avoid dumping refuse in drainage channels”. This, points to the disregard for law and regulation strongly voiced in the government actors' group.

b. **Treatment Recommendation and Problem Solution:**

To contribute to the solution of flooding, the identified frames reveal several actions taken by these agencies. According to Omeiza (2020) report, their plans are categorized into three. The first is in information dissemination to appropriate stakeholders. They state that they have “produced and disseminated the Disaster Risk Management and Implications of the 2020 Seasonal Rainfall Prediction Early Warning messages to relevant stakeholders”. Secondly, they started “public enlightenment campaign (i.e. radio and TV jingles, social media, etc) targeting vulnerable communities to undertake mitigation actions...”, lastly, their identification of “higher grounds for possible IDP camps... desilting of river channels and canals; removing refuse... from water channels”. In their recommendation, they appealed to economic value of positive climate decisions and asked the government to be more proactive in their decision making.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

One particular approach to studying ecological discourses and stories is to analyse how they are framed. Frames are resourceful to text creators. They are tools by which the print media convey information on events to their audience in the best possible linguistic terms especially with regards to reports on ecological issues. Just as Lakoff (2006) rightly pointed out, frames comprise mental structures which allow human beings to understand reality as well as bring forth what we consider as reality. They are the social cognition of events shared by a particular set of people or a community. Different frames are adopted to present or represent different ecological events so as to evoke the desired perception of such issues and reactions towards them. In this research therefore, from ecolinguistics perspective, we analyzed the framing of flood events in selected newspaper reports in Nigeria. Stibbe's Ecolinguistic Framework for Frame and Metaphor Analysis, and Framing theory guided our data interpretation. We discovered the various source frames by which the concept of flooding and its activities were put forth by these news reporters. Inferences from the source frames of **ANGRY BEING, LANDLORD, HEALTH CHALLENGE, WAR, CONTAINER SUBSTANCE** and **PURPOSEFUL MOVEMENT** were identified in this research as used to depict the activities of flooding and its control in Nigeria. The baseline of our discourse here is on critical language awareness by the media as well as the people, which significantly contribute to ecolinguistics researches. It is worthwhile to point here that, the way the voice of narratives perceived the incidents of flooding greatly influenced the way it was framed as well as the treatment recommendation. The crux of the matter is that from our analysis, of these voices, there is the resolution to engage flooding in the act of war, literally. In as much as, researches state that rather than engage flooding in a battle, we should live with and accommodate it, Fleming (2002); adaptation strategies have also been suggested which include taking structural and non-structural measures to reduce the impact of flooding on the ecosystem, (Carmin, et al 2015). However, while we agree with the position of these researchers, we state here that, from the analysed discourses, the entailments such as battle, fight, combat, etc., from the lexical field of war are metaphorically framed to clearly depict the readiness and seriousness of the concerned parties to protect the ecosystem from the effects of flooding. It has been noted that an issue is framed with an intention which most times is for persuasive purposes. To this end, this research posits that, the use of the identified frames is to whip up the desired cognitive and emotive sentiments which will persuade and influence the decisions to urgently contribute towards flood prevention and management thereby ensuring ecological protection.

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