CONSTRUCTING CHANGE OR STATUS QUO. AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSITIVITY CHOICES IN POLISH NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

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Abstract

This paper falls into the realm of critical discourse studies by exploring the relationship between particular discourse structures and their meaning as set against a particular socio-political context. To do that it takes the popular analytical tool of transitivity taken from Halliday's systemic-functional grammar to examine particular configurations of process types as employed by three Polish daily newspapers: *Trybuna Ludu* [People's Tribune] - the official voice of the communist authorities, *Trybuna* [Tribune] - *Trybuna Ludu*'s ideological successor, and *Gazeta Wyborcza* [Electoral Newspaper] - the opposition's newspaper. The time period considered is that between 1944 and 1991, which encompasses a number of defining moments in Polish history, as well as the period of communism and the breakthrough period of political transformation. The analysis mainly looks at process types in headlines featured on the front pages of the three dailies, against a specific historical backdrop and considers their critical potential. As such, the analysis aimed at establishing how particular, dynamic historical/political circumstances were represented through the types of processes in headlines. The results show that the discourse patterns were not only motivated, but also related to social structures in the form of power relations or certain ideological effects. Thus, the analysis is not only revealing when it comes to the notions of agency and control within a specific local context, but also proves the constitutive power of discourse which can both reproduce or change the social world, thus being itself the 'agent' of change, but also, and oftentimes instrumental in preserving a status quo.

Keywords: transitivity, process types, headlines, newspaper discourse, history, ideology

1. Introduction

The relationship between ideology and language has proved to be a potent and popular research theme especially within the area of Critical Linguistics (CL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which have interrogated a variety of especially institutional discourses, concentrating their attention on the more or less

subtle biases evident in discourse and consequential asymmetries of power attributed to a specific participant or participants in a given communicative event. The modes explored in the quest in question have included not only the linguistic, but also, and more often so the visual mode, marking therefore a growing interest in how meaning is made with visual semiotic resources (see for example, Jewitt and Oyama, 2001; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996/2006; Van Leeuwen, 2008; O'Toole, 1994).

The present study also falls into the realm of the above-mentioned studies in that it explores the relationship between particular discourse structures, verbal structures in particular, and their meaning as set against a particular socio-political context, the details of which will be explained in the section that follows.

The section below thus presents the data under analysis in the present paper and the time period the data in question belong to. It also discusses why transitivity, an analytical tool used in the present study, has been a particularly useful interpretative tool, also in the context of critical media discourse analysis which has often focused on, though by no means limited itself to the role and purpose of headlines.

2. Data and methodology

As mentioned above, the data for the analysis consist of the headlines found in the three Polish newspapers: *Trybuna Ludu* [People's Tribune] - published from 1948 to 1990, the official voice of the authorities and the communist party, *Trybuna* [Tribune] - created in place of *Trybuna Ludu* in 1990 as its ideological and institutional successor, and *Gazeta Wyborcza* [Electoral Newspaper] - founded in 1989 "following the conclusion of the Round Table Discussions as an electoral paper with the aim of propagating the opposition's views prior to the elections" (Giorgi, 1995, p. 90).

Within the timeframe relevant to the study, i.e. 1944 -1991 the seven following periods were identified:[1] 1948–1955 – The building of the Stalinist model of socialism, 1956–1980 – The 'Classical' period of the Polish People's Republic (PRL), 1980–1981 – Period of 'diarchy' (official authorities vs. Solidarity),[2] 13.12. 1981–21.07. 1983 – Martial Law, 1982– 1989 – The erosion of the previous system and its final breakdown, 1990 – The first free democratic presidential elections (22.12.1990), 1991 – The first free democratic parliamentary elections (27.10.1991). Each of them marking salient stages in Polish history could be represented in a more general manner and marked respectively 1) Creation (1948-1955), 2) Consolidation & establishment (1956-1980), 3) Emergence of an alternative force (1980- 1981), 4) Reestablishment of the old force

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[1] The division based on Czubiński's (2003) historical analysis.

[2] Solidarity, Polish Solidarność, "Polish trade union that in the early 1980s became the first independent labour union in a country belonging to the Soviet bloc" ('Solidarity' in Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Solidarity accessed 9.01.2024)

(13.12.1981-21.07.1983), 5) Erosion and final breakdown (1982-1989), and finally, 6) Creation of the new system, followed by the end of the transformation (22.12.1990 and 27.10.1991). Within each of the periods above, one suitably representative year was chosen; therefore, the sampling includes 1950, 1960, 1980, 1982, 1989, 1990 and 1991. Within a particular year, the first issue of each month was chosen, such that twelve issues would be produced, unless some of the newspapers had their first issues published later in a given year. All in all, the selection procedure resulted in a data set of 115 newspaper issues. The final sample considered for the analysis consisted of these newspapers' front pages only, in particular, the headlines they featured.

As for its analytical focus, the analysis concerns the transitivity choices made in the respective newspapers throughout the time period analysed. The main focus is on describing the various headlines in terms of "process types". The larger project of which the present analysis is only a fragment also considered the particular "participants" and "circumstances" involved, which cannot however, for reasons of space, be discussed here in detail.

As for the analytical tool, the Systemic Functional Grammar of Halliday (SFL), a broader model of which transitivity is only but one notion, is a lexico-grammar theory which posits language as a network of options from which language users make choices. The present analysis draws upon one tool of Hallidayan grammar, namely "transitivity", which is a descriptive tool allowing one to interpret the representational structure of a clause. In the words of Halliday and Matthiessen: "The transitivity system construes the world of experience into a manageable set of PROCESS TYPE. Each process type provides its own model or schema for construing a particular domain of experience as a figure of a particular kind" (2004, p. 170). Depending on the process type we can have different participants' roles, for example, "the choice of a material process involves choosing the associated roles of an Actor (obligatory), and optional elements such as a Goal, Range or Beneficiary, whereas the choice of a mental process will involve roles such as Senser and Phenomenon" (Eggins, 2004, p. 214). Apart from the process type, which is the major system, there is also the "circumstantial system". As much as this paper recognises the importance of examining the circumstantial aspect of the clause alongside the participants involved, the discussion here, as already mentioned will, for reasons of space, mainly focus on the process types. Due attention will however be given to the two remaining aspects when it is seen fit. As for the various types of processes, they include "material", "mental", "relational", "behavioural", "verbal" and "existential processes". The sections below briefly account for the three types of processes (alongside the associated participant roles) which were found to be the most prevalent in the data under examination, namely material, existential and verbal processes. The description is based on Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) and Eggins's accounts (2004) to which the reader may want to refer for a detailed description of the remaining types of processes as well as other aspects of

transitivity. The examples come from the above-mentioned sources. The names of the specific participants were put in brackets and added by me to some of the examples for the sake of clarity.

2.1 Material processes

Material processes concern processes of doing, actions which are concrete and tangible, as in 1) "Diana has donated blood 36 times" or 2) "Diana went to Geneva" (Eggins, 2004, p. 215). The semantic definition is that "some entity does something, undertakes some action", while the identifying criterion for this type of processes is that "they can be probed by asking: *What did x do*?" (Eggins, 2004, p. 215).

The most popular types of participants in material processes are "Actors" and "Goals". The former is the "constituent of the clause who does the deed or performs the action", while the latter is "that participant at whom the process is directed, to whom the action is extended" (Eggins, 2004, p. 216). When the clause is active and has only one participant, then the participant will be an "Actor". The following represents a material process involving both an "Actor" and "Goal": 3) "I (Actor) started writing short stories (Goal) while I was at Yale" (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004, p. 185) or 4) "She (Actor) carried the bomb (Goal) onto the plane" (Eggins, 2004, p. 217).

There is also a distinction made between the "Goal" and a participant called the "Range", found in the relationship between the process and the second participant. "Range" is defined along the following lines: "1. either it is a restatement or continuation of the process itself or 2. it expresses the extent or 'range' of the process" (Eggins, 2004, p. 218). The following exemplify "Ranges": 5) "They ran the race (Range)" or 6) "They were playing bridge/tennis/a game (Range)" (Eggins, 2004, p. 218).

Another type of participant is the "Beneficiary", of which there are two types - a "Recipient" and a "Client". The former refers to "the one to whom something is given", while the latter is "the one for whom something is done" (Eggins, 2004, p. 220). The following illustrate "Recipients" and "Clients": 7) "Did Kerry give you (Recipient) those files there?" (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004, p. 190), 8) "But in Switzerland they give you (Recipient) a cognac" (Eggins, 2004, p. 220), 9) "I'll heat up some soup for you (Client)" (Eggins, 2004, p. 221) or 10) "The last phrase he told me was that our fate is to build for our children (Client) an assuring future" (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004, p. 190). Two other kinds of participants involved in material processes are "Scope" and "Attribute". Halliday and Matthiesen (2004, p. 190) illustrate the former with the following: 11) "Then cross Hyde Park and the Domain (Scope) to the Art Gallery of NSW" or 12) "[T]he administration was not optimistic of reaching a final deal (Scope) before George W. Bush becomes president on Jan. 20". The following two sentences exemplify the latter: 13) "Mr Bannister described how an unarmed black

American, Mr William Whitfield, was shot dead (Attribute) in a New York supermarket on Christmas Day last year when an officer mistook the keys he was carrying for a gun", 14) "They stripped her clean (Attribute) of every bit of jewellery [she ever had]" (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004, p. 190).

2.2 Existential processes

Existential processes "represent that something exists or happens" (Halliday and Matthiesen, 2004, p. 256). They are typically realized by the verb *to be* or *to occur*, *to exist*, *to arise*, etc. An existential process involves only one obligatory participant, namely the "Existent". The following are examples of existential processes: 15) "There was snow (Existent) on the ground", or 16) "There were these two wonderful Swiss men (Existent)" (Eggins, 2004, p. 238).

2.3 Verbal processes

Verbal processes concern the action of saying and its synonyms. The three participants typically involved in this type of process are: a "Sayer", a "Receiver" and "Verbiage". The "Sayer", which does not have to be a conscious being, is in charge of the verbal process. The one at whom the saying is directed is the "Receiver", while that which is said is the "Verbiage" (Eggins, 2004, p. 235). The following exemplify the verbal processes: 17) "The Arab boyfriend (Sayer) told her (Receiver) a lot of rubbish (Verbiage)" or 18) "They (Sayer) tell you (Receiver) nothing (Verbiage)" (Eggins, 2004, p. 235).

2.4 Transitivity and representation

As well as being a useful analytical tool, transitivity analysis can be extrapolated to the interpretation of the representation of a broader social reality. That is precisely why SFL considers the choice of a process type to be very important. Iwamoto (1995, p. 61) affirms that "a writer's selection of one pattern of grammaticalization or configuration from among alternative ways has the effect of foregrounding certain meanings (process, participant) while suppressing or concealing others". For this reason, claims Iwamoto (1995, p. 61) "transitivity has been a useful tool in uncovering the particular mind-style or world-view encoded in the structure of a language (see also Halliday, 1971; Burton, 1982; Kennedy, 1982)". In a similar vain, Min (1997, p. 153) draws our attention to the ideological aspect of the selections made. "Selection between process types", affirms Min (1997, p. 153), "has an effect of highlighting or backgrounding agency, and such choices are ideological because the motivated obfuscation of agency results in leaving attributions of causality and responsibility unclear" (see also Li, 2010; Collins et al., 2018; Liu and Jia, 2019; Shi and Fan, 2019; Alraimi and Abdalla, 2019; Asad et al., 2019; Ekhteyar and Umrani, 2021). This ideological aspect of the selection process becomes even more relevant when considering newspaper

headlines whose role and purpose have been explored by research on media discourse. Of particular importance to such studies is the ideological function of headlines. By way of explaining this, Kuo and Nakamura (2005, p. 400) refer to van Dijk (1991), who has suggested that "because headlines summarize what the journalist considers the most important aspect of a news event, and such a summary necessarily implies an opinion or a specific perspective on the event, they may bias the understanding process and influence the interpretation made by the readers" (see also for example, Bell, 1991; Fowler, 1991; Min, 1997; Teo, 2000; Fang, 2001; Page, 2003; Koosha and Shams, 2005; Seo, 2013). Looking at the choices made in headlines, including transitivity choices, may offer an insight into the ideological meanings underlying newspaper reporting.

Considering the above, the analysis that follows attempts to go beyond bare description of newspaper headlines in terms of the transitivity choices made and considers the critical potential of such choices alongside the way headlines could vary as a function of social/political change.

2.5 Procedure for the analysis

The specific procedure for the analysis was the following: firstly, all the headlines were classified as a particular kind of process. Secondly, all the relevant categories were noted. Thirdly, out of all the categories those occurring most frequently were recorded, that is categories which amounted to 10 or more were marked as the 'most frequent' categories. Then, the most frequent categories were plotted on graphs. In section 3.2 'Transitivity choices and possible motivations' (see 'Analysis and discussion' section below) an attempt to establish relations between the peaks in the occurrence of certain types of processes and the time period when they occurred has been made and the reasons for such occurrences have been conjectured. It should also be noted that only headlines proper were analysed, and consequently no eyebrows (superheads) or subheadings were taken into account. Also, ads and lines constituting 'fixed' parts of some of the front pages, such as "W numerze: …" [In today's issue:…], were not considered in this study.

At this point it serves well to remark upon the category of "existential" processes and the way in which these were applied throughout the present analysis. As mentioned earlier, in the present paper, among the various process types, there are existential processes which describe things as simply being. As such, some of the headlines take the form of such "existential" processes realised by the verb *to be*, or a synonym. Such a process type is marked in the analysis as "ex" (i.e. "existential" process). Among the headlines, however, there were many cases where a headline would be constituted by a single word or several words, conjoined, as in the case of nouns or nominal groups. Then such headlines are categorised as simply P/ex ("Participant/ex" not discussed in the present analysis) and referred to things or people as simply 'being' there, but they were not accompanied by an "existential" verb. Another "existential" category

needs clarification as to its application, namely the category of "P/ex (Event)". In the present analysis this has been understood as a nominalised action, and/or having the quality of being an event that took place, arose or occurred. Thus, in the case of the headline such as: "Zjazd KPZR w poniedziałek" (July) [Convention of the United Workers' Party on Monday], "Zjazd KPZR" is categorized as P/ex (Event) and as such is classified as an "existential" process (Event). Table 1 below presents the most common types of processes (categories which amounted to 10 or more than 10) as found throughout the time period analysed in the respective newspapers.

Table 1. Most common types of processes

Newspaper	Process
1950 (Trybuna Ludu)	material (57)
1960 (Trybuna Ludu)	material (41)
	P/ex (Event), existential (25)
	verbal (10)
1980 (Trybuna Ludu)	material (60)
	P/ex (Event), existential (27)
1982 (Trybuna Ludu)	material (51)
	P/ex (Event), existential (19)
1989 (Trybuna Ludu)	material (30)
	P/ex (Event), existential (25)
1989 (Gazeta Wyborcza)	material (20)
1990 (Trybuna)	material (34)
	P/ex (Event), existential (16)
1990 (Gazeta Wyborcza)	material (35)
	P/ex (Event), existential (12)
1991 (Trybuna)	material (32)
1991 (Gazeta Wyborcza)	material (20)

The sections that follow provide a detailed discussion of process types presented in Table 1. Section 3.1 'Processes' in particular, discusses process types, section 3.2 'Transitivity choices and possible motivations' gives a more general overview of the motivations behind the transitivity choices, while section 3.3 'Conclusions on the analysis of headlines' discusses the issues raised by the examples and the analysis in broader terms.

3. Analysis and discussion

3.1 Processes

Among the various kinds of processes found in the analysed newspapers, three types - material, existential and verbal - were the most predominant. The three types of processes, when plotted on their respective graphs, were found to reach a peak in certain time periods. Thus, even though a material process type was indeed present in all the periods considered for the analysis, its particular prominence was marked in four out of all the periods. Figures 1 – 3 below illustrate the way the three processes shaped themselves throughout the time period.
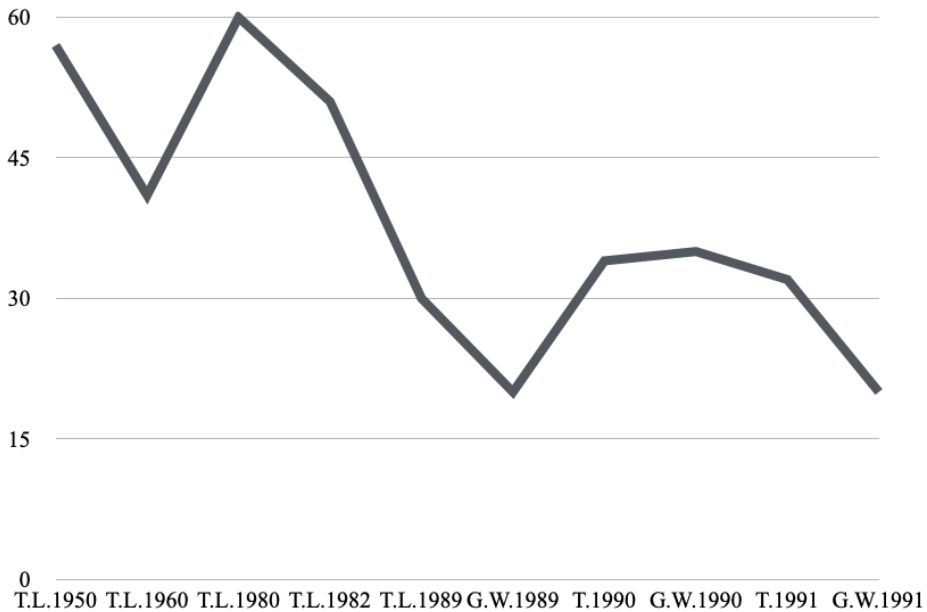
Figure 1. Material processes

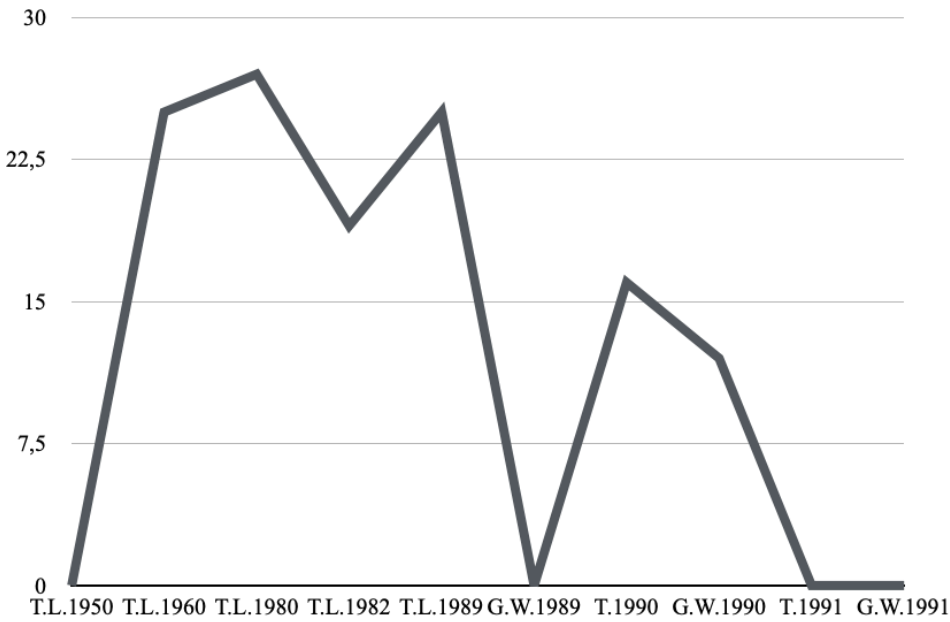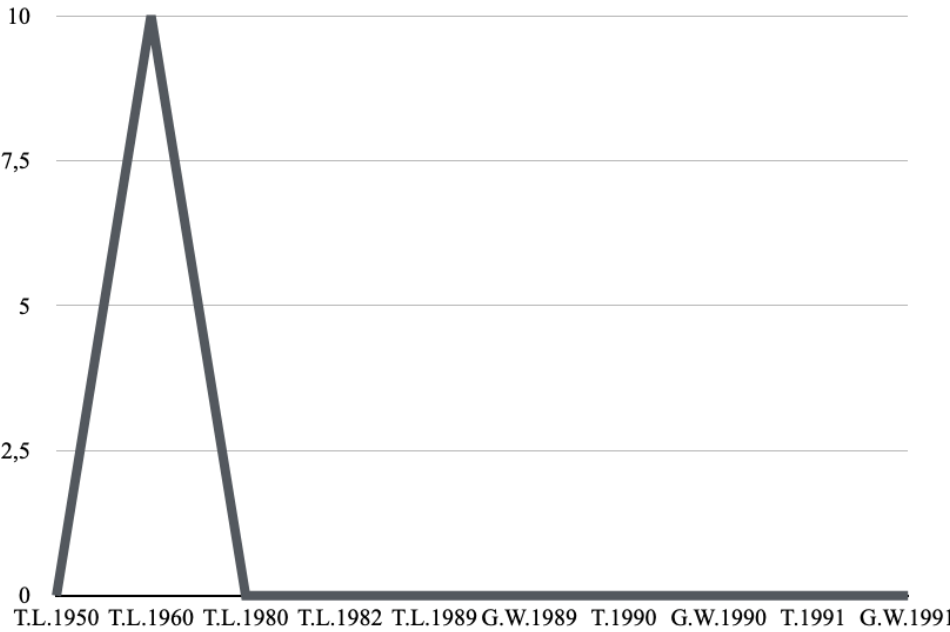**Figure 2.** Existential processes

Figure 3. Verbal processes

3.1.1 Material processes

In the case of material processes (Figure 1 above) one can note their prominence in three periods: 1950 (*T.L.*), 1980 (*T.L.*) and 1990 (*T.* and *G.W.*).[3] Taking a closer look at what these particular kinds of processes concern, and also the particular "Actors" and "Goals" involved, may be revealing with respect to the possible reasons why a particular type might occur most frequently in a given time period.

In 1950 (The building of the Stalinist model of socialism), the roles of "Actors" were taken by either ordinary people, as in "Robotnicy Francji walczą przeciw obniżce stopy życiowej" (March) [French workers fight against lowering the standard of living], or "Kobiety obsługują precyzyjne maszyny" (March) [Women operate precision machinery], state institutions, e.g. "Państwowe ośrodki maszynowe otoczą opieką spółdzielnie produkcyjne" (Feb) [State machinery centers will take care of the production collectives] or still bigger entities such as countries, like "ZSRR nawiązał stosunki dyplomatyczne z Wietnamską Republiką Demokratyczną" (Feb) [USSR entered into a diplomatic relationship with the Vietnamese Democratic Republic]. With respect to "Goals" they would most often refer to the results of work done by "Actors", which would be in process, already achieved or scheduled to be done in the future, such as in "Załoga cementowni 'Grodziec' chlubnie wypełniła zobowiązania 1 Majowe" (May) [Working team of 'Grodziec' honourably fulfilled its May 1 obligations]. Sometimes "Goals" would refer to those who the state might not have approved of as in: "Kobiety mówią: dobrze, że rząd uderzył w spekulantów" (Nov) [Women say: it is good that the government cracked down on speculators]. In general, the tone of the headlines concerning material processes would be positive, i.e. they would concern positive actions or potentially positive actions undertaken by "Actors", though on certain occasions the actions presented would be negative, as in "Rząd fiński więzi robotników a ukrywa zbrodniarzy wojennych" (March) [Finnish government imprisons workers but hides war criminals]. Here, the "Actor", through being involved in the action in question, would be also depicted in a negative way.

With regard to material processes in 1980 (Period of 'diarchy' (official authorities vs. Solidarity)), the major change compared to 1950 is that the headlines have become more focused on one particular kind of topic - politics in general, and on State politics in particular. With respect to the "Actors" involved in this type of process, they were either State/party institutions like "II Krajowy Zjazd ZSMP zakończył obrady" (May) [Second National Convention of the Polish Socialist Youth Union finished its meeting], or individual politicians, including those of allied countries, e.g. "Sekretarz KC PZPR przyjął ambasadora Polski w ChRL" (Nov) [Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party hosted Polish ambassador to Chinese People's Republic].

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[3] In figures as well as throughout the analysis *T.L.* stands for *Trybuna Ludu*, *T.* stands for *Trybuna*, while *G.W.* stands for *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

The "Goals" of their activities would be State/party politics. The second and most frequent topic of material processes in 1980 was that of economics.

In the case of headlines representing material processes as found in *Trybuna* in 1990, one can see that the newspaper no longer focuses on any particular line in politics (cf. *Trybuna Ludu* from the previous periods), and although the majority of the "material" headlines still concern politics, they are not focused on any particular subject, political group, etc. Also, in the case of the headlines representing material processes, one notices that some of them now concern certain social, political/social issues. Still, this is present to a lesser degree when compared with those headlines which have politics as their sole subject matter.

Gazeta Wyborcza from the same year seems to keep its 'political' focus and is now commenting on the newly emerging circumstances. "Actors" involved in material processes in this year concern themselves with politics in general as in "Bonn spełni żądania Polski" (March) [Bonn will fulfil Poland's demands] or "Tymiński kradł programy" (Dec) [Tymiński was stealing programs]. The same is true of "Goals", like "Przyślijcie kogoś z Polski" (Jan) [Send somebody from Poland] or "Litwa zamraża niepodległość" (July) [Latvia 'freezes' independence].

3.1.2 Existential processes

The second group of processes marked as most prominent among all of the processes found in the respective newspapers were existential processes. There were four periods in which these peaked (Figure 2 above): 1960 (T.L.), 1980 (T.L.), 1989 (T.L.) and 1990 (T.).

In the case of existential processes in 1960 (T.L.), they would most often refer to various national/state/party celebrations in Poland, such as "Dziś konferencja warszawska PZPR" (March) [The Polish United Workers' Party Warsaw Conference today], or to similar celebrations taking place in allied countries, e.g. "Dziś defilada wojskowa w Moskwie" (May) [Army march today in Moscow]. Other "existential" processes would refer to environmental disasters, as in the following example "Katastrofalna powódź" (April) [Catastrophic flood].

Similarly, in 1980 (T.L.) existential processes would again mostly refer to various government/party events, like "Dziś VII Plenum KC PZPR" (Dec) [VII Plenary session of the Central Committee of the United Workers' Party today].

Existential processes in *Trybuna Ludu* from 1989 would also concern politics, predominantly national politics, for example, "Obrady XI Plenum KC PZPR" (April) [XI Plenary session of the Central Committee of the United Workers' Party]. This tendency changes in the case of *Trybuna* from 1990, where existential processes now refer to a mixture of political and social/human interest topics. The former may be illustrated with the following example "Spotkanie Mazowiecki –

Bush"[4] (Oct) [Meeting Mazowiecki - Bush], while the latter can be exemplified with the following "Pożar 'Pod Baranami'" (Aug) [Fire in 'Pod Baranami'].[5]

3.1.3 Verbal processes

The last most noticeable type of process is that of verbal processes. Interestingly, one notices their predominance in only one period - 1960 (see Figure 3 above). Here, the role of a speaker (P/Sayer) would be assigned to categories such as working people, high rank army officials, Polish party officials, an allied country or the newspaper itself. On the whole, both the speakers and the subject of their 'talk' would be political or politically motivated. As mentioned earlier, for reasons of space the article does not include a more detailed discussion of participants. One particular case, however, requires a closer look, namely a participant (P/Sayer) involved in a "verbal" type of process from the year 1989 as featured in *Gazeta Wyborcza*. As noted above, the prevalence of "verbal" processes have been noted in only one period, that of 1960 (*Trybuna Ludu*). Thus, the appearance of "P/Sayer" in Bar chart below (Figure 4) corresponds to the verbal processes noted in the same year (see Figure 3 above). Here, as already mentioned the role of the speaker is assigned to categories such as working people, high rank army officials, Polish party officials, an allied country, or indeed the newspaper itself. The appearance of the "P/Sayer" participant in 1989 (*Gazeta Wyborcza*) may seem more surprising (Figure 4 below), as there were no corresponding verbal processes marked on the graph (Figure 3 above). It should be noted, however, that this is due to the way the "P/Sayer" participant, as found in *Gazeta Wyborcza* in 1989, has been categorized in the present analysis. Some of the *Gazeta Wyborcza* headlines had the following form: "Lech Wałęsa: 'Żeby było inaczej i lepiej musimy te wybory wygrać'" (May) [Lech Wałęsa: 'To make a difference and improve the situation we have to win this election'].[6] It should be noted that in such a case 'Lech Wałęsa' would be categorised as "P/Sayer", while at the same time there would be no actual verb marking the verbal behaviour, and so this would not get reflected in the graph illustrating verbal processes. In terms of the identity of "Speakers", *Gazeta Wyborcza* provides a public platform to various individuals and groups: Lech Wałęsa, PZPR (Polish United Workers' Party),

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[4] Tadeusz Mazowiecki, "Polish journalist and Solidarity official who in 1989 became the first noncommunist premier of an eastern European country since the late 1940s." ('Tadeusz Mazowiecki' in Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Tadeusz-Mazowiecki accessed 9.01.2024)

[5] "The Piwnica pod Baranami (English: The Basement, or the Cellar under the Rams) is a Polish literary cabaret located in Kraków, Poland." ('Piwnica pod Baranami' in Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piwnica_pod_Baranami accessed 8.01.2024)

[6] Lech Wałęsa, "labour activist who helped form and led (1980–90) communist Poland's first independent trade union, Solidarity. The charismatic leader of millions of Polish workers, he went on to become the president of Poland (1990–95). He received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1983." ('Lech Wałęsa' in Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Lech-Walesa accessed 9.01.2024)

ZSL (United People's [Peasant] Movement), George Bush, Solidarity, the Polish Senate, the spokesman for KC PZPR (Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party) and the Primate of the Polish Catholic Church. All of these would take the opportunity to comment on current issues relevant to the respective parties. It is difficult to say whether this strategy that *Gazeta Wyborcza* employs could, in any way, affect the content of what they said, and their status as "Speakers". It may be claimed, however, that a verb involved in a "verbal" process could certainly have a modifying effect on both the content and the speaker.

Figure 4. Participant 'Sayer' (P/Sayer)
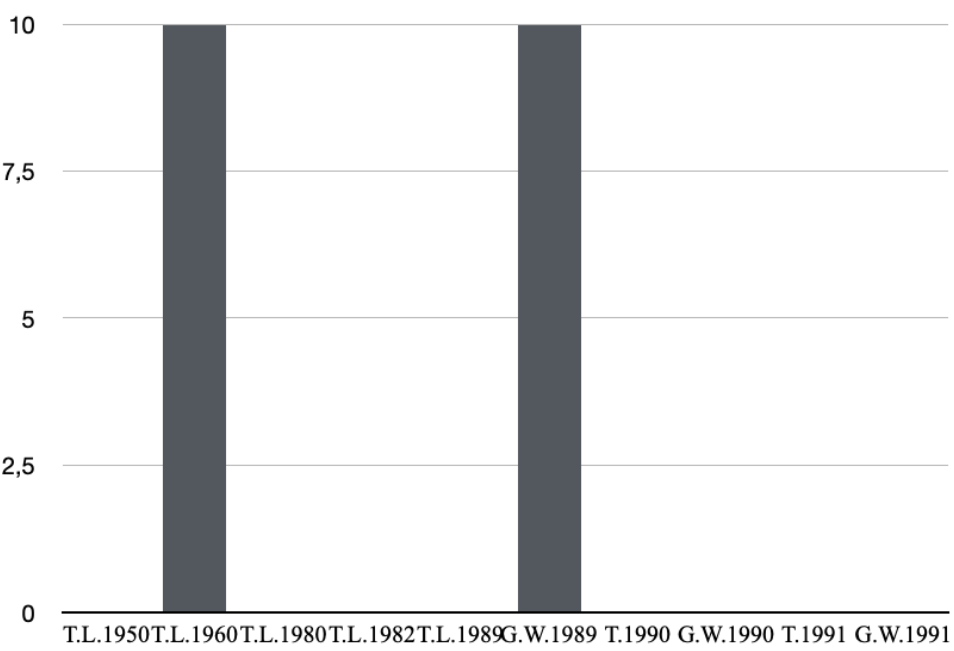
3.2 Transitivity choices and possible motivations

The present section looks at the most prominent types of processes, and when it is seen fit, the participants the processes in question involved. The subject matter and types of processes described above, when coupled with the particular periods in which they occurred, suggest certain motivations behind the making predominant one or more types of processes rather than others at a particular time period.

Beginning with the most prevalent type of process, "material processes", the following reasons for their occurrence in the four particular periods may be put forward: 1) In 1950 (Building of the Stalinist model of socialism), by assigning the roles of "Actors" to ordinary people, state institutions or bigger entities such as countries, (allied countries in particular), the newspaper may have wished to

emphasise the active role of all the various parties in the process of building a new system, which the country was undergoing at the time. With respect to ordinary people, it can be argued that this had an 'empowering effect'. Moreover, with regard to state institutions and allied countries, the intention may well have been to emphasise active involvement at both a national level (state institutions) and also a worldwide level. Consequently, in the same process, there was most likely an attempt to give the impression of common involvement in a shared cause. This effect could have been further enhanced by presenting all the parties in question as involved in positive or potentially positive activities, especially for ordinary citizens. 2) In 1980 (the period of 'diarchy' – emergence of the opposition force), the role of "Actors" was assigned to one type of political actor (State/party institutions or individual politicians, party officials), and presented them as being involved in various political activities. This served to somehow 'mark' the presence of the State, embodied here through the party and party officials, at times when its legitimacy might have been threatened. Furthermore, their involvement in political activities might well have served to emphasise its continued role. 3) In 1990, (the first democratic presidential elections), in the case of *Gazeta Wyborcza* (the opposition's newspaper), material processes concerned mostly politics, and in particular, the new political circumstances. It could be argued that the newspaper wished to emphasise this newness, and was attempting to encourage people to take interest in, and effectively support, politicians and activists representing it. In the case of *Trybuna* (the communist newspaper's successor) from the same year, however, it seems that by not concentrating on any particular aspect of politics, the newspaper most probably wanted to defocus, or one could say, even confuse readers at election time.

The occurrence of the second-most prevalent type, "existential processes", presents yet another set of possible motivations. 1) In 1960, (the 'Classical' period – stabilisation), the appearance of existential processes concerning mostly State/party celebrations or other allied countries, most likely served to emphasise greater stability as the country entered into a period where the new political system was now consolidated. Describing the contents in question as 'being' rather than 'being done', might have also served to counterbalance the material processes present, and as such, it introduced an element of stability. 2) In 1980 (the period of 'diarchy' – the emergence of the opposition forces) the presence of existential processes, referring here mostly to government/party institutions, may well have served to give an impression of stability, and emphasise the continuity of the state and its institutions. 3) In 1989 (Erosion of the system and its final breakdown) *Trybuna Ludu*'s motivation was most probably similar. The majority of existential processes presented the reader with political news, most of which referred to national party politics. Thus, through presenting national politics in "existential" terms, such as 'being there' as opposed to 'being done', the newspaper emphasises the continuity of the State and the previous order when faced with the progressing

erosion of this same system. 4) In the year of the first free and democratic presidential elections (1990), *Trybuna*'s focus is no longer solely political (compare *Trybuna Ludu* from 1989). Its headlines, in the form of "existential" clauses, offer the reader a mixture of both political and social news. Interestingly, this political news refers to the new political situation, and writing about it in terms of existential processes (e.g. "Pogrzeb cenzury" (Feb) [Funeral of censorship]) could suggest the newspaper's acknowledgement of the changes (and as such, also the people whose beliefs they represented).

The appearance of "verbal processes" can be explained in the following way: In 1960 (the 'Classical' period – stabilisation) the choice of those to whom 'voice' is given seems to be taking place in line with the State's policy. During this time, it may be suggested that empowering people, by giving them the opportunity/right to speak, was an inherent characteristic of the newly consolidated system. At the same time, it can be argued that by allowing only certain individuals and groups to 'speak', the newspaper was suggesting that these are the legitimate ones, to the exclusion of other groups within society. The presence of "P/Sayer" participant in 1989 in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, on the other hand, even though unaccompanied by the actual verb, indicates a much wider variety of speakers representing very different and often opposing political views.

3.3. Conclusions on the analysis of headlines

The aim of the present section is to discuss in more general terms the issues raised by the examples and the analysis above. The previous sections in this paper focused on the aspect of the representation and construction of social reality, relating to the ideational function of language. The transitivity analysis in particular dealt primarily with the types of process, and, tough to a lesser degree commented on the associated participants.

As stated before, transitivity has been a popular analytical tool among advocates of such schools/perspectives as CL, CDA or other approaches which combine both linguistic analysis of texts and a social orientation to discourse. What becomes evident from such analytical endeavours is that first, transitivity can be useful in the analysis of representation of broader social reality. Second, transitivity proves especially suited to "relating structure to communicative function" (Fowler, 1991, p. 5). And finally, transitivity can be illuminating regarding the ideological underpinnings of particular representations. For these reasons, transitivity is helpful in the analysis of newspaper reporting, particularly headlines whose ideological implications have been widely acknowledged.

Taking the above into account, the aim of this analysis was to look at the transitivity choices in headlines as seen against a particular historical backdrop, describe the choices in question and consider their critical potential. More specifically, the analysis aimed at establishing how particular, dynamic historical/political circumstances were represented through transitivity choices

in headlines. In other words, the issue was how political circumstances manifested themselves at the level of discourse. Of consequence is Fairclough's claim that "which process type is chosen to signify a real process may be of cultural, political or ideological significance" (1992, p.180). Based on the analysis of transitivity categories (the observed peaks regarding the process types), the following representations in the three newspapers become evident:

Trybuna Ludu [People's Tribune]
(The official voice of the authorities and the communist party)

In 1950 (Building of the Stalinist model of socialism), the newspaper shows an overall tendency to emphasise the positions of ordinary people, State institutions and the allied countries as active participants ("Actors") commonly involved in the process of the building a new system ("Goal"). Interestingly, while ordinary people are perceived as actively contributing to the economy, it is the State, the party, military officials, or the national economy that are the beneficiaries ("Recipients") of its development. In 1960 (the 'Classical' period – stabilisation), the newspaper emphasises greater stability of the new political system by portraying State/party celebrations and other allied countries in terms of existential processes. In the same year, the newspaper 'allows' only certain groups to speak ("Sayer"), namely those of working people, high rank army officials, Polish party officials, an allied country and the newspaper itself. In 1980 (the period of 'diarchy' – emergence of the opposition force), the newspaper 'marks' the presence of the state and emphasises its active role by assigning the role of active participants to various political actors. At the same time, it emphasises a new way of doing politics by assigning the role of "Clients" to foreign state officials hosted by various Polish state officials. Finally, while emphasising the active role of the state, the newspaper also emphasises its continuity and stability by portraying it in terms of existential processes. This same strategy was true of 1989 (during the erosion of the system and its final breakdown).

Gazeta Wyborcza [Electoral Newspaper] (The opposition's newspaper)

In contrast to *Trybuna Ludu*'s (1960) choice of who should be assigned the role of a "Sayer", *Gazeta Wyborcza* in 1989 (Erosion of the system and its final breakdown) provides a much wider spectrum of individuals and groups the opportunity to speak, marking a new chapter in the political life of the country at the time. The political focus is further present in the year 1990 (the first democratic presidential elections), albeit in a different manner, when the newspaper shows the new, emerging conditions by commenting on them in terms of "material" processes.

Trybuna [Tribune] (*Trybuna Ludu*'s ideological and institutional successor)

In contrast to *Gazeta Wyborcza*'s political focus, *Trybuna*'s "material" processes in the year 1990 (the first democratic presidential elections) do not concentrate on any particular aspect of politics. Also, it shifts from being solely political to including social, political/social issues. Interestingly, speaking of certain aspects of the new political reality in terms of "existential" processes, such as abolishing censorship, the newspaper most likely acknowledges the changes that have taken place. This same shift in focus can also be seen in the following year (1991 - the first free democratic parliamentary elections), when the newspaper presents things in "existential" terms to a much greater degree than in the previous year. This, when coupled with the reduced focus on political matters, might have been read as the newspaper's attempt to distance itself from the present changes.

4. Conclusion

Applying the critical perspective and following Fowler's (1991, p. 5) understanding of what a critical inquiry involves (see also Blommaert, 2005, p. 25), the following insights could be put forward regarding the results just outlined.

First, the choices made regarding transitivity were not accidental - one could imagine alternative choices having been made. On the whole, it could be claimed that the newspapers' political orientations determined the choice of processes used to represent the political/social reality at a particular time. The results of the analysis show that the respective newspapers favoured certain types of processes and participants. It seems that it is by no accident that *Trybuna Ludu* (the communist newspaper), for example, decided to assign the roles of "Actors" to the State, working people and allied countries as those actively involved in the effort of the building a new political system, at precisely the time when this new system was being established. *Trybuna* (the unofficial successor of *Trybuna Ludu* [People's Tribune]) on the other hand, showed a strategy of distancing itself from the political situation by changing its focus to include a variety of not only political issues. In this sense, the results of the analysis prove the point advocated by those working within the critical tradition - the news is always a construction rather than a 'true' and value-free reflection of facts.

Second, not only were the discourse choices (transitivity choices in this case) motivated, but it seems they were also related to social structures in the form of power relations or certain ideological effects. This could be observed most clearly in the case of *Trybuna Ludu*, whose discourse served a particular line of the state's politics. Following Fowler et al. (1979, p. 90 as cited in Fairclough, 1992, p. 26), it could be said that language served to "confirm and consolidate the organizations which shape it". Such clear political motivations are less apparent in *Trybuna*, which is not to say that certain ideological underpinnings of its representations are gone altogether. What becomes evident is the shedding of blatantly ideological

motivations and its role as an advocate of the State's politics. *Gazeta Wyborcza*'s representations on the other hand are characterised by its continuous concern with the new. They also mark a certain change with respect to the political life in the country at the time. This can be observed in the newspaper's strategy whereby it gives a voice to a much wider spectrum of individuals or groups regardless of their political beliefs. It could be argued that the newspaper not only contributes to a greater pluralism of voices but also their credibility. If we were to comment on the perspectives adopted by the respective newspapers, we could argue that *Trybuna Ludu*'s perspective was that of the state, acting as an active mouthpiece and advocate of the authorities. *Trybuna*, its unofficial successor, on the other hand, assumes the role of a more withdrawn commentator/observer, while *Gazeta Wyborcza*'s role was that of an active commentator, advocate and presenter of change.

Third, the analysis has also shown how transitivity structures do the work of shaping reality. Thus, it seems that the discourse reflects the social/political circumstances, while being constitutive of it. Of relevance here is Fairclough's reference to one of Bourdieu's observations about political discourse, which "provides the clearest illustration of the constitutive power of discourse: it reproduces or changes the social world by reproducing or changing people's representations of it and the principles of classification which underlie them" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 182). Thus, in the context of the present analysis it could be argued that the role of newspaper discourse was that of reproducing, especially in the case of *Trybuna Ludu*, but also changing certain representations and beliefs, especially with respect to *Gazeta Wyborcza*. This is hardly surprising, considering the origins and activities of the three newspapers under analysis. Of importance, however, were the means by which this reproduction or transformation took place. Here we could also point to Blommaert's (2005, p. 27) reference to one of CDA's claims inspired by Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration that "actual language products stand in a dialectic relation to social structure, i.e. that linguistic-communicative events can be formative of larger social processes and structures". Giddens explains the relationship between discourse and change similarly to Bourdieu. Furthermore, some other insights from Social Theory could also be brought to comment on the discourse's role in the present analysis, for example, Gramsci's concept of hegemony. One could argue then that discourses represented by the respective newspapers were hegemonic insofar as they were aimed at constructing alliances, integrating certain classes of society (and at times excluding others) and ultimately winning their consent (Fairclough, 1992, p. 92). One could also refer to Croteau and Hoynes (2018, p. 168) who point out that "Media are cultural sites where the ideas of the powerful are circulated and where they can be contested". Thus, in the context of the present analysis, one could interpret the role of the newspapers as that of spreading and sustaining a particular set of hegemonic ideas (*Trybuna Ludu*, *Trybuna*) or spreading counter-hegemonic ideas in order to restructure the existing power relations (*Gazeta Wyborcza*).

Moreover, Habermas' theory can provide yet another insight into the role of discourse in social and political change. Looking at the respective newspapers as part of a wider social structure, one could argue that the analysis above illustrated how the state-controlled propaganda colonized the public sphere (*Trybuna Ludu*, *Trybuna*) and how it was subsequently re-claimed by the Solidarity movement (*Gazeta Wyborcza*) (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, p. 88–89).

Finally, it seems fit at this point to comment on the importance of an analysis of headlines such as this one. First, by virtue of their structure and purpose, headlines construct the "most prominent ideological views of the texts as well as preferred meanings for the news texts" (Min, 1997, p. 157). This is of significance, as presenting different groups or ideas in a particular way could prompt particular readers' attitudes (see e.g. Stamou, 2001, p. 665). Lastly, if we were to treat "media texts as a form of social action which can be responded to with other forms of social action", following Fairclough (1995, p. 205), then particular types of media representation and their effects become even more useful as windows to society.

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