



Let the Circumstance Speak: A Focus on the Circumstance in a Register Study

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Abstract

The place of the Circumstance in Systemic Functional Grammar's transitivity system has always been considered peripheral due to its optional status in traditional grammar and as such several transitivity studies unfortunately ignore the Circumstance as a tool of analysis. This study argues for and demonstrates the use of the Circumstance as a major tool of analysis in linguistic studies. This is achieved by exploring the Circumstance in a register analysis of newspaper editorials. The data for the study consist of four-month political newspaper editorials selected from state and private newspapers in Ghana. The study found Location is the predominant Circumstance and the Circumstance of Place is the dominant kind of Location in the political newspaper editorials. The Location performs the function of emphasizing the context of political activities and struggles in the texts. Again, most Location Circumstances are placed in the clause-final positions and are often expressed by prepositional groups. These findings are instructive because in their status as optional elements, the choices of particular Circumstances should be deemed intentional and purposeful. The study concludes with two important observations: as registers, political newspaper editorials are characterized by the Circumstance of Location, and secondly, the Circumstances can serve as a viable, insightful focus of linguistic analysis of texts.

Keywords

Circumstance, Transitivity, Register Analysis, Newspaper Editorial

INTRODUCTION

Systemic Functional Grammar has provided significant insights into the workings of language in accounting for communicative functions and ideological representations that are expressed and constructed in texts. The place of the theory among linguists is celebrated and continues to be a vessel through which our world is understood through language. As a functional theory, Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is distinct from other functional theories in that it regards the clause as the largest unit of analysis other than the sentence (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Van Valin (2001) describes SFG as a functional approach that is between extreme and moderate functionalism because it takes a discourse-oriented view of language though it acknowledges the reality of structure in language. It considers language as a meaning-making tool that has grammar as the resource for creating meanings (Matthiessen et al., 2010). In recognition of this role of grammar, SFG uses the expression functional to indicate the fact that grammar is semantically motivated and based on meaning (Halliday, 1994).

The clause, described as "the central processing unit in the lexicogrammar" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 10), holds the place of the mapping of semantic functions called the metafunctions. These metafunctions are encoded in

the grammar of language and exist simultaneously. Though all the metafunctions combine to represent a register, each of them is capable of being systematically analyzed to provide insights into the functional organization of the grammar of a language.

Among the metafunctions is the Ideational metafunction which looks at the clause as representation or language as a reflection. The Ideational metafunction is used to model how language represents realities of the world; it is used to construe experiences (Simpson, 2004). Halliday and Matthiessen (2004; 2014) sub-classify the Ideational Metafunction into two subsystems through which representations are made: the Experiential Metafunction and the Logical Metafunction. The Logical metafunction represents the meaning expressed through the chaining of clauses when speaking or writing. This chain is referred to as the clause complex which, according to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004; 2014), expresses the fact that clauses are linked to one another in a text by means of some kind of logico-semantic relation. Eggins (2004) defines a clause complex as the term systemicists use for the grammatical and semantic unit formed when two or more clauses are linked together in certain systemic or meaningful ways. By extension, a clause complex can be seen as different but carefully selected clauses that are put together to communicate. The expression “carefully selected” is important because not all clauses can be placed adjacent to each other to make meaning. Experiential meaning is expressed through the system of transitivity with different associated participant roles in different configurations. This function is a valuable resource that allows for the exploration and understanding of how speakers and writers construct their experiences of the world. Thus, how language users pass on their ideas can be examined through the transitivity system. In analyzing a transitivity structure in a clause, three aspects of the clause are considered: the selection of the process (represented by the verbal group), the selection of participants (represented by the nominal groups) and the selection of circumstances (represented by the adjuncts – prepositional phrase or adverbial groups).

The Circumstance belongs to the transitivity system though it is often de-emphasized in transitivity studies. In the words of Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 221), Circumstances “are more peripheral and unlike participants, they are not directly involved in the process.” Hence, many scholars (Adjei, 2015; Alharbi, 2021; Lams, 2019; Megah & Noor, 2021; Win, 2021) principally resort to the processes (the verbal) and participants (nominals) as a means of construing meaning and ideologies at the level of the clause. The Circumstance (adjuncts) are considered ancillary to the containment of meanings that are viable on their own to comprehensively examine discourses.

This research argues that the Circumstances are viable meaning-creation and meaning-containing tools that, on their own, can significantly uncover a deeper understanding of discourses, and can be a tool in characterizing discourses beyond the domains of the processes and participants. Though unlike processes and participants, users of language have the flexibility of choosing circumstances or not, a choice of a particular circumstance should be of great concern. Hence, the Circumstance can be considered as a major linguistic focus for analysis if its functional underpinnings are given attention. To confirm this assumption, this research examines the use of the Circumstances in political newspaper editorials to highlight their functions in the discourse.

The Circumstance contributes to the expression of meaning in the clause in many ways and are often realized through prepositional phrases or adverbial groups. Circumstantial elements serve the purpose of expansion of an idea or a process in the clause. Because of this function, they cannot stand on their own – an attribute that is described by Halliday & Matthiessen (2004, 2014) as parasitic on other processes.

The circumstantial elements can be examined from three perspectives (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 311). First, from the perspective of the clause, it can be mapped onto the Adjunct which is used in clauses to provide or limit a particular meaning to a process or another word in a sentence. From this perspective, the circumstance is not regarded as being capable of functioning as the subject or performing modal responsibility in the clause. Secondly, circumstances can be examined as associations or attendants on the processes by specifying or identifying elements in the clause like the location of an event in time or space, its manner, or its cause, among others expressed through notions of when, where, how and why things happen as captured in the prepositional groups or adjuncts. Finally, circumstances are associated with adverbs or prepositional phrases.

Matthiessen (2018) broadly classifies the semantic motifs of circumstances to include expansion and projection which generally permeate the content plane of English to extend the clause nuclei. These broad semantic motifs, considered semantic fractiles, represent the semantic functions of the circumstances. Besides the projection function of circumstances, the expansion subclassifies into the enhancing, elaborating and extending types of circumstances.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) identify nine main types of circumstances that can be placed under these broad functions of the circumstances. Thus, the nine types of circumstances are known to perform four functions in the clause: enhancing, extending, projection, and elaborating. *Figure 1* below demonstrates the complex system network of the Circumstance. It is this complex system of the Circumstance that is examined in political newspaper editorials to account for the editorials as registers.

Newspaper Editorials

Newspaper editorials are essential in presenting institutional opinions of media houses. They are opinion and argumentative texts with the sole purpose of influencing the opinions of large audiences (Ansary & Babaii, 2005; Elyazale, 2014; Mintah, 2024; Van Dijk, 1992). As an opinion text, the editorial is conditioned to present evaluations and comments about issues. In this way, it serves as a positioning and comment article that is featured in newspapers to provide representations and expressions of ideas of editors and newspapers as institutions.

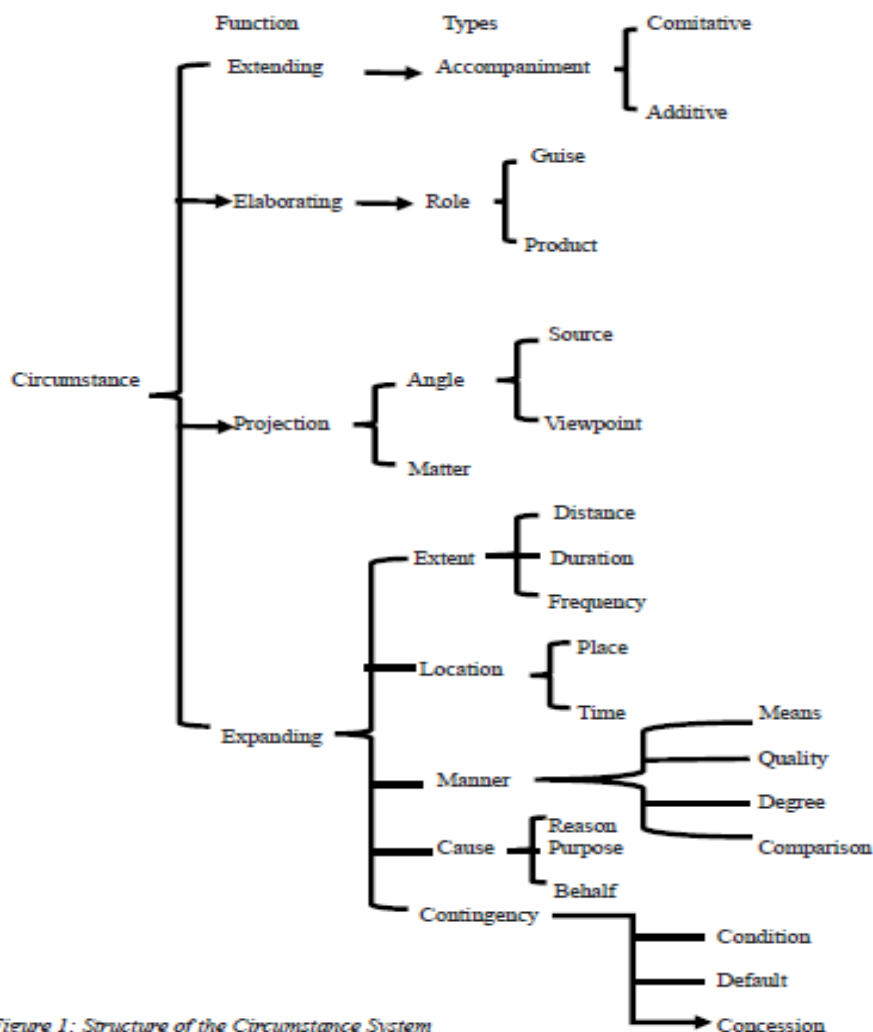


Figure 1: Structure of the Circumstance System
Source: Authors

The importance of the editorial in newspapers is marked by its functions in newspapers. To Biber and Conrad (2009), the editorial, as a subgenre of newspapers, is meant to perform two important functions: to express an opinion overtly and persuade readers to that opinion. Thus, every editorial is written to make a case for an opinion by clearly stating the opinion and arguing for it: the processes of argumentation and persuasion (Elyazale, 2014; Farrokhi & Nazemi, 2015). Van Dijk (1992) extends the functions of editorials to include interactional, cognitive, socio-cultural and political functions. The interactional function refers to the primary function of argumentation and persuasion which occur between the newspapers as institutions, and the readers. The cognitive function highlights the use of the editorial to reproduce group attitudes and ideologies among the public. The socio-cultural function highlights use of the editorial to assesses the actions of actors usually with social and cultural underpinnings to formulate and reproduce acceptable norms and values. Finally, the editorial is used politically to implement power by legitimizing, balancing or challenging the dominance or power of a group of people or institutions. Hence, political newspaper editorials are important means for politically aligning and persuading the public towards the interest of political ideologies.

As registers, the features of newspaper editorials have been examined from several grammatical perspectives. For example, Biber and Conrad (2009) describe the editorials to be characteristic of modals and according to Frimpong (2007), the modal auxiliaries used in newspaper editorials are largely specialized while there are others that are minimized or entirely neglected. Also, the nominal group is considered the dominant structure of editorials and the pre-modification of the nominal group of Determiner + Head is often the most used in editorials (Afful, 2014). From the level of sentences, Wiredu (2012) asserts that complex declarative sentences with multiple rank-shifted structures serve as the pervasive linguistic item at that level of grammatical analysis. This study contributes to the discussion of newspaper editorials as registers by furthering linguistic insights into an often-ignored functional grammatical perspective of Circumstance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research adopted the mixed methods approach in analyzing and interpreting the findings. Thus, it incorporated qualitative and quantitative research approaches (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative approach was used to provide an in-depth and interpretive understanding of the linguistic features that characterized the newspaper editorials (Flick et al., 2004; Snape & Spencer, 2003). On the other hand, the quantitative approach was used to count and compare the linguistic features across the two groups of newspapers (Creswell, 2014). In this way, the inherent weakness in the use of a single approach was compensated for by the other which provided the researchers an opportunity to leverage both methods to

obtain a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic phenomenon, as indicated by scholars (Frimpong, 2015; Creswell, 2014).

Four of Ghana's top newspapers' editorials provided data for the study. These included two state newspapers (*Daily Graphic* and *Ghanaian Times*) and two private newspapers (*Daily Guide* and *Chronicle*). These newspapers were purposefully selected based on factors such as academic interests, circulation, and prominence (Fosu, 2014; Frimpong 2015; Mintah, 2024). According to Elliot (2018), these represent the leading newspapers in Ghana's newspaper landscape as the most widely circulated.

As the Circumstance belongs to the transitivity system, all clauses in the data were coded according to the processes with their attending circumstances as stipulated by the theory. After that, the data were entered into the quantitative application software, AntConc, to generate the frequencies of the occurrence of elements functioning as Circumstances and to search their contextual information for further analysis. The frequencies and percentages for each category of the Circumstances in the analysis were also plotted, charted, and tabled using Microsoft Excel. The researchers measured the attested frequencies of variables in each of the four newspapers from the two ownership contexts of private and state newspapers using the Chi-square test to support or contradict the differences and similarities between the two groups of newspapers. Pearson's critical value of 0.05 was used to determine the statistical significance of variations in the frequency of variables, as this value is regarded as a standard for studies (Frimpong, 2015; 2017) that offer comparative insights into language realizations in newspapers.

Biber and Conrad (2009) have asserted that in analyzing registers three elements must be addressed: a description of the situational context of use, a description of the pervasive linguistic features, and a reflection of the function of the pervasive linguistic features in the situational context. From the Hallidayan perspective, register studies are conducted by examining variations in instantiation in how language use in a particular situation reflects the register variables of field, mode and tenor. This perspective emphasizes the quantitative representation of linguistic features and their probabilistic instantiation in a situational context (Frimpong, 2017). According to Frimpong (2017), these two perspectives correlate in a lot of ways. The field in SFL is relatable to the communicative purpose, topic and setting in Biber and Conrad's situational variables; Mode to the channel of communication and the production and comprehension circumstances; and Tenor to participants and relations among participants (Frimpong, 2017, p. 79).

While this perspective is assumed in this study, the analysis emphasizes the quantitative representation of the linguistic features of the Circumstances and explores the functions of the instantiations in the data. It is important to note that the texts selected for this study shared extensive situational features to ensure they can be considered texts of the same register. The data were political editorials published in selected Ghanaian newspapers from September to December 2016, a period marked by several political activities because of the elections held in that year. The researchers ensured that the texts had similar participants who engaged in the activities the texts indicated. The texts had the same channel (print publications, newspaper editorials), production circumstances, settings (Ghana, 2016), communicative purpose (persuasive texts), and topic (politics, election in Ghana).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis explores how, as a linguistic tool, the Circumstances reveal a pattern of instantiation that marks the political newspaper editorials as registers. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), the register concerns "a functional variety of language — the patterns of instantiation of the overall system associated with a given type of context" (p. 27). In other words, the language used in texts is functional and may vary from one text to the other. The presence of these variations in texts of the same kind and or texts of different kinds allows for the classification and characterization of texts as registers. These are, however, context-dependent, as well as functional (Biber & Conrad, 2009). Thus, as opined by the theory, texts with the same communicative and situational contexts have core or dominant linguistic feature that are common or similarly patterned (Biber & Conrad, 2009, p. 2). Texts of the same variety must, therefore, have linguistic patterns that are easily recognized and identical. As Frimpong (2015) puts it, "linguistic features within a given register are essentially similarly distributed across dialects of the same language because they are functional choices people make to fulfill communicative functions within a situational context" (p. ii).

These claims indicate that if the linguistic features of texts of the same register, as the newspaper editorials used for this study, are examined, they must necessarily have similar identifiable dominant linguistic patterns that can be used to characterize the variety. Thus, the linguistic features of the texts used for this study should show less variations, particularly in the dominant linguistic feature of the register. Armed with these assumptions, it is argued that if the Circumstances that are used in the texts are examined, the texts must show similar patterns of the kinds of the circumstances realized because those selected for this demonstration have the same communicative goal and belong to the same context. The study, therefore, probed this assumption and the statistical attestations of the Circumstances are presented in the *Table 1* below.

Table 1 Distribution of Circumstances

Function	TYPE	DGUIDE	CHRON	GTIMES	DGRAPH
Enhancing	1 Extent	6 (1.4%)	7 (1.2%)	18 (5.0%)	6 (2.1%)
	2 Location	237 (53.4%)	339 (56.7%)	177 (49.7%)	228 (54.4%)
	3 Manner	54 (12.2%)	48 (8.0%)	36 (10.1%)	48 (11.4%)

	4 Cause	30 (6.8%)	51 (8.5%)	39 (10.9%)	42 (10.0%)
	5 Contingency	5 (1.1%)	8 (1.3%)	3 (0.8%)	6 (1.4%)
Extending	6 Accompaniment	33 (7.4%)	45 (7.5%)	33 (10.1%)	27 (6.4%)
Elaborating	7 Role	15 (3.4%)	27 (4.5%)	18 (5.0%)	21 (5.0%)
Projection	8 Matter	63 (14.2%)	61 (10.2%)	24 (6.7%)	33 (7.9%)
	9 Angle	1 (0.2%)	12 (2.0%)	6 (1.7%)	3 (1.4%)

Table 1 indicates that the patterning of the element of Circumstances in the two groups of newspapers provides instructive insights into the preferences of the Circumstances in political newspaper editorials. The Circumstance of Location serves as the dominant type of Circumstance in both groups of newspapers (state, 52.2%; private, 55.8%). However, as differences, while the state newspapers prefer to emphasize the Manner (10.8%) of actions that unfold as the second choice of Circumstances, the private newspapers prefer to emphasize the Matter (11.9%) of actions. Again, while the state newspapers use the Cause (10.4%) as the third preferred type, the private newspapers emphasize the Manner (9.9%) as the third choice of Circumstances in the data. The rest of the Circumstances, nevertheless, follow a similar pattern. The state newspapers had an order of Accompaniment (8.1%), Matter (7.3%), Role (5.0%), Extent (3.5%), Angle (1.5%) and Contingency (1.2%). The private newspapers, however, used the Circumstances of Cause (7.7%), Accompaniment (7.6%), Role (4.1%), Angle (1.2%), Extent (1.2%) and Contingency (0.6%) in that order.

These findings indicate that as registers, political newspaper editorials have the Location Circumstance as the dominant circumstantial feature. The emphasis on Location is significant as it reflects the important function of time and place in political texts, including political newspaper editorials. Goetz (2023) and Qian (2019) suggest that discussing politics is to talk about time and place as these not only provide perspectives for explication of political phenomenon, specification of political activities and ideas, systematization of political decision and phenomenon, and moments of application ideals, but they also provide context of political struggles and activities. Thus, political newspaper editorials are preoccupied with using the Circumstance to provide contexts of political actions engaged in by political actors or institutions. As newspapers editorials are persuasive texts, the dominance of Location Circumstances informs that the newspapers find that emphasizing the times and places events unfold are more effective in influencing public opinions.

The few distributional variations that exist in the other circumstantial features in the data may serve as stylistic differences which could be a means of characterization of the newspapers as either state or private newspapers and can, hence, be ideologically motivated. For instance, the data informs that state newspapers prefer Manner and Cause as the subsequent dominant Circumstances after Location. The Circumstances of Manner construes the way a process is actualized and specifies how a process unfolds in its accomplishment (Matthiessen et al., 2010). Apart from the Location of processes that unfolds, the state newspapers appear preoccupied with enhancing the details provided in the clause by indicating how processes unfold. Instructively, in expressing the Circumstance of Manner, the state newspapers make great use of the Quality kind of Manner over the Means, Degree and Comparison. This was used to positively project the actions of participants which included stakeholders involved in the political processes like the Electoral Commission and its officials (*swiftly, particularly*), politicians (*publicly, clearly, in an objective manner*), security service (*swiftly, carefully*) and citizens or voters (*deliberately, jealously*). Examples:

1. we must guard *jealously* {CircumstanceMannerQuality} the peace that we currently enjoy

The state newspapers, in emphasizing Cause, used the Purpose kind more than Reason and Behalf in the data. Thus, several of Cause Circumstances realized in the data indicate the intentions behind actions that unfold in the clauses. They expand the actions of political institutions, politicians, security and citizens and these expansions were generally positive. Examples:

2. The stage is set for *intensive campaigns all across the country* {CircumstanceCausePurpose}

The private newspapers' choice of Matter as the second dominant Circumstance reflects the newspapers' inclination to project issues that the political editorials focus on. Example:

3. It is *about macro-economics* {CircumstanceMatter}

Again, the Manner Circumstances emphasized in the private newspapers generally characterize the Quality of the Manner of actions that unfold in the clauses more than Means, and Degree of the actions. Examples:

4. her presidential candidate, Nana Akuffo Addo would have lost *terribly* {CircumstanceMannerQuality} in the constituency.

These variations should be regarded as possibly stylistic differences that can help identify a newspaper as either a state newspaper or a private newspaper. However, as a register, the political newspaper editorials have the Location Circumstance as the pervasive linguistic item, as demonstrated in Table 1 above. To examine the patterns of this pervasive linguistic item, the discussion that follows centers on the Circumstance of Location.

Location

The Circumstance of Location is a circumstantial element that is used to construe *where* and *when* a process unfolds in space and time. It is significant in indicating the context in which a process unfolds. The data reveals the Location as a major circumstantial element as it makes up the majority of the Circumstances realized. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), the Circumstance of Location is expressed in two kinds: the Circumstance of Time and the Circumstance of Place.

Register assumption holds that the features of the dominant linguistic item in a register are constrained, and must, therefore, be similarly patterned extensively (Frimpong, 2017). It was, therefore, expected that the realizations of the Circumstance of Location in the data would be similarly patterned extensively across the two groups of newspapers. This assumption was tested in the data. One of the findings, particularly on the pattern of the types of Location Circumstances realized in the data, is presented in *Table 2* below.

Table 2 Patterns of Location Kinds

	DGUIDE	CHRON	GTIMES	DGRAPH
Time	94 (39.7%)	152 (44.8%)	79 (44.6%)	92 (40.4%)
Place	143 (60.3%)	187 (55.2%)	98 (55.4%)	136 (59.6%)

Table 2 points to the fact that all the groups of newspapers similarly choose Place more than Time Circumstances of Location.

The private newspapers collectively expressed the Location Circumstance of Place in 57.5% of the occurrence of the Location. In other words, the private newspapers prefer to indicate where actions or processes unfold, thereby declaring the setting of an action. Examples:

5. The story of the Tweea DCE is still fresh *in our memories* {CircumstanceLocationPlace}
6. *From the Brong Ahafo Region* {CircumstanceLocationPlace} comes the story of Kwesi Opong Ababio MCE for Sunyani

The state newspapers, like the private newspapers, mostly expressed Location Circumstances by emphasizing the Location of Place more than the Location of Time. The Location of Place is used 243 times representing 67.8% of the Locations. Examples:

7. Indeed, this is enshrined *in Ghana's Constitution*. {CircumstanceLocationPlace}
8. the politicians and their families sit *far away from the scene of violence* {CircumstanceLocationPlace}

This realization is significant in the pursuance of the objective of this study. As a major Circumstantial element in the data, the similarity in the patterning of the types of Location not only confirms the extensive similarity in the instantiation but also underscores the semantic function of the Circumstances emphasized in the political editorials. According to Qian (2019), all political struggles and actions are place-based and as such place is greatly emphasized in politics to highlight the center of actions engaged in by politicians and also to draw attention to the identities, and the power that are contested in politics. To Qian (2019), establishing place creates a sense of common purpose and articulates the goals of collective actions and activism. Thus, as a function, the political newspaper editorials' emphasis on Place Location Circumstances helps project *where* political actions, activism, identities, and power are contested in the discourses around politics. The dominance of this kind of Location suggests that the functions of Place Circumstances are prioritized in political newspaper editorials, and perhaps inure to the persuasive functions of the editorials better than the function of the other kinds of Circumstances.

Another pattern that was examined was the position of the Location Circumstance. This exploration is relevant as the placement of the Circumstance at the clause-initial, clause-medial or clause-final position matters to the function of the Circumstance in the clauses. For instance, in Systemic Functional Grammar, a clause-initial position allows the circumstance to function as the Theme of the clause that governs the message of the clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) and projects what writers want readers to focus on in the clauses. This can also serve a cohesion function between clauses and ideas. Examples of the placement of the Circumstances at the clause-initial, clause-final and clause-medial are presented in examples (9), (10), and (11) respectively below.

9. *Yesterday* {CircumstanceLocationTime}, Ghanaians once more had a rare opportunity
10. there were few irregularities *during the two-day special voting exercise* {CircumstanceLocationTime}
11. The Electoral Commission (EC), has *in the last few days* {CircumstanceLocationTime}, taken a number of steps

The attestations of the pattern as observed in the data are presented in *Table 3* below.

Table 3 Position of Location in the clause

Loc Position	DGUIDE	CHRON	GTIMES	DGRAPH
Clause-initial	48 (20.3%)	67 (19.8%)	44 (24.9%)	53 (23.2%)
Clause-medial	87 (36.7%)	108 (31.9%)	52 (29.4%)	69 (30.3%)
Clause-final	102 (43.0%)	164 (48.4%)	81 (45.8%)	106 (46.5%)

The findings in *Table 3* indicate that as registers, the Circumstance of Locations is overwhelmingly used at the clause-final position: Daily Guide, 43.0%; Chronicle, 48.4%; Ghanaian Times, 45.8%; and Daily Graphic, 46.5%. Thus, the editorials of both state and private newspapers consistently featured Location mostly at the end of the clause although a substantial number was realized in the clause-medial position. The dominant placement of the Circumstance at the clause final-position suggests that the political newspaper editorials do not often make the Location Circumstance a textual cohesive device neither do they make it the Theme of the clause to serve as an orientation of the structure, and a salient item of the clause. Again, the clause-final position essentially marks the newspaper editorials as registers as other registers may observe a different pattern. For example, Gborsong and Appartaim (2019) note that academic writings often have the adverbials at the clause-medial positions.

Furthermore, the attestation of the form of the Location Circumstance was examined. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the Circumstances are often expressed as adverbial groups and prepositional phrases. The observation of the preferred form of the Location in the editorials are presented in *Table 4* below.

Table 4 Form of Location

Form of Loc	DGUIDE	CHRON	GTIMES	DGRAPH
AdvG	35 (14.8%)	64 (18.9%)	28 (15.8%)	42 (18.4%)
PP	202 (85.2%)	275 (81.1%)	149 (84.2%)	186 (81.6%)

As *Table 4* indicates, the most occurring grammatical form of Location is the prepositional phrase. The prepositional phrase as a Circumstance is used over 80% across all the newspaper editorials examined. This overwhelming use of the prepositional phrase may be motivated by the complexity of the grammatical structure whose clause-like nature enable it to embed other groups. This essentially allows writers of newspaper editorials to provide more information within the phrase to easily expand on complex ideas. Thus, as registers, political newspaper editorials tend to express the dominant linguistic feature of Location Circumstance as a prepositional group.

CONCLUSION

The research set out to explore Circumstances as a linguistic tool for a register study in political newspaper editorials. The study found Location as the dominant Circumstance, dominantly expressed through prepositional groups at clause-final positions. Further, the Circumstance of Place was the dominant Location in the data and was used to highlight the context of political activities and ideas, and political decision and phenomenon in the political editorials. As persuasive texts, the dominance of the Circumstance of Location which provides contexts of political actions, activities and decisions suggests that the political newspapers editorials' emphasis on the times and places events unfold are considered by the editors as necessary and more effective in influencing public opinions.

The findings of this study assert two important insights. First, the Circumstance of the transitivity system could be an engaging tool for linguistic study as their attestations and functions are important for textual details. Secondly, the study provides a novel insight that political newspaper editorials as registers are marked by the Circumstance of Location as their dominant Circumstance with Place as the most preferred Location and prepositional groups the pervasive realization. Similarly, it was observed that the most preferred position of the Location Circumstance is the clause-final. It is recommended that, for further studies, the Circumstance of the transitivity system should be explored in other registers to enrich the discussion about their significant roles in discourses. Again, studies can explore the ideologies expressed by Circumstances in texts to further the understanding of the roles of Circumstances.

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The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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