



TAMSAAL

ISSN Print: [3007-5939](#)

ISSN Online: [3007-5947](#)

Volume 4, Number 7, 2026, Pages 479 – 490

Journal Home Page

<https://tamsaal.pk/index.php/tamsaal/index>

TAMSAAL
JOURNAL



Systemic Functional Linguistics and Register Variation: A Hallidayan Analysis of Field, Tenor, and Mode in Pakistani English Newspapers Discourse

Hina Ajmi¹, Dr. Nadeem Anwar², Iqra Anam³

¹English Lecturer at Raiwind Law College, Lahore & PhD English Scholar, Department of English, Imperial College of Business Studies, Lahore, Email: hinaajmi1@gmail.com

²Associate Professor, Higher Education Department, Punjab, Pakistan & Associate Professor, Imperial College of Business Studies (ICBS), Lahore, Pakistan, Email: nadeem.anwar@ric.edu.pk

³PhD English Scholar, Department of English, Imperial College of Business Studies, Lahore, Email: iqraanam707@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received:	June	13, 2026
Revised:	July	08, 2026
Accepted:	July	20, 2026
Available Online:	July	28, 2026

Keywords:

Systemic Functional Linguistics, register variation, transitivity, mood and modality, appraisal theory, thematic progression, cohesion, Pakistani English newspapers, corpus analysis, AntConc

Corresponding Author:

Hina Ajmi

Email:

hinaajmi1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates register variation in Pakistani English newspaper discourse through a Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) lens, addressing a persistent gap in existing Pakistani media research where field, tenor, and mode have rarely been examined together within one integrated framework. Grounded theoretically in Halliday and Matthiessen's Systemic Functional Grammar, together with Martin and White's appraisal framework and Halliday and Hasan's cohesion model, the study analyses field through transitivity, tenor through mood, modality, and appraisal, and mode through thematic progression and cohesion. Data are purposively collected from three Pakistani English-language newspapers — Dawn, The News International, and The Express Tribune — comprising a population of national English-language print and online news content, from which a sample of 400 headlines (approximately 134 per outlet) and 60 full-length reports/editorials (20 per outlet) is drawn. Manual clause-level coding is triangulated with AntConc-based corpus analysis to verify frequency and collocational patterns. The study expects to reveal systematic, metafunctionally interrelated register configurations that vary meaningfully across outlets and across the spoken-written divide, contributing new theoretical and empirical insight into Pakistani news language.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59075/tamsaal.v4i7.125>



© 2026 The Authors, Published by ULLR. This is an Open Access Article under the Creative Common Attribution ([CC-BY 4.0](#))

Introduction

Language in the news is never “neutral,” it is always coded, that is to say, it is created within a social context. According to Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, a resource can be used to generate meaning at three levels: ideational, interpersonal, and textual, and the contextual variables of field, tenor, and mode (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) can be correlated. This framework has been extended to a full account of register by Christian Matthiessen who claims that the combinations of field, tenor and mode are systematically different in communicative contexts and in text types (Matthiessen, 2019). In recent times, SFL has gained ground in new contexts of discourse such as media, education, and multilingual contexts (Banks, 2024).

Pakistani English-language newspapers have a unique sociolinguistic position; English is an official language and an elite second language and the journalistic style used in these papers is influenced by both British norms and local socio-political factors (Zaidi, 2019). A number of studies have focused on fragments of this discourse, all of which have informed SFL. These analyses have highlighted the processes involved in the construction of ideological positions in print media coverage of national issues like the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (Ekhteyar & Umrani, 2021; Manzoor & Yousaf, 2023) and health controversies related to the same (Kiran & Akhter, 2024), and comparative studies have demonstrated the importance of transitivity in comparing Pakistani and international coverage of major events, thereby identifying pattern-type choices as cultural framing (Qasim, 2024). The study of election editorials has found that transitivity and appraisal can be integrated to reveal evaluative stance (Qasim et al., 2021), while the study of editorials focusing on gender has employed transitivity to investigate the portrayal of the crime and violence against women in headlines and reports (Abbas & Talaat, 2019; Akram & Yasmin, 2023, 2024; Akram et al., 2025). A comparative ideational analysis of COVID-19 editorials in Pakistan and the UK also revealed that the former has more process-type distribution in comparison with the latter, even for the same crisis (Aslam et al., 2022). The most recent, wide-ranging sociolinguistic study of Dawn & The Express Tribune demonstrated how the combination of these resources creates social and cultural meaning (Arain & Akram, 2025).

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the discourse field of Pakistani English news using the transitivity patterns.
2. To analyze the mood, modality and appraisal in Pakistani English news discourse.
3. To study the thematic progression and cohesion in the news discourse of Pakistani English.

Research Questions

1. What is meant by the term 'field' in terms of transitivity in Pakistani English newspapers?
2. What is meant by tenor in terms of mood, modality and appraisal in the Pakistani English newspapers?
3. What is mode in terms of thematic progression and cohesion in the Pakistani English newspapers?

Significance of the Study

This research project is an extension of Hallidayan register theory to a largely unexplored media context in South Asia and provides empirically informed understanding of the interaction of field, tenor and mode in shaping Pakistani English news discourse across media and text types.

Thesis Statement

This study contends that there are systematic, metafunctionally interrelated register configurations (transitivity, mood/appraisal and thematic configurations) that vary meaningfully across the three Pakistani English newspapers, Dawn, The News International and The Express Tribune, and across the spoken-printed continuum.

Literature Review

Theoretical foundations: SFL and Register

Systemic Functional Linguistics sees language as a resource for meaning making organised around three concurrent metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal and textual, realised in three simultaneous grammatical systems: transitivity, mood, and theme (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). According to Eggins (2004), these metafunctions are a linguistic reaction to three situational factors (field, tenor, and mode) which determine register. Later, Matthiessen (2019) made the theory of register a formalized model so that situational variation systematically influences the choice of lexicogrammatical features, which forms the conceptual framework that is used for the analysis of Pakistani news discourse in this study. Fundamental concepts of the textual-metafunction, namely cohesion and thematic organisation, are based on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) description of cohesive ties, while Martin and White's (2005) appraisal framework expanded interpersonal analysis from mood and modality to systematic evaluation, attitude and stance. This is supported by field reviews which reveal that SFL is still diversifying in terms of methodology and theme, with the increased use of corpus tools (Banks, 2024).

Transitivity in Pakistani and Comparable News Discourse

Transitivity analysis is the most popular SFL technique used in media research in Pakistan. Similarly, by employing transitivity, Ekhteyar and Umrani (2021) demonstrated that CPEC presentation in Dawn and The News is a project that is undeniably positive economic development. Manzoor and Yousaf (2023) showed the same by tracing the pro-CPEC presentation through process-type selection. Kiran and Akhter (2024) took this investigation one step further, focusing on how health hazards are reported on coal projects along the CPEC. Comparative transitivity research also has explored the Pakistani outlets' perception of international events in comparison to foreign media, finding that there are differences in terms of process-type distribution and participant roles (Qasim, 2024). Gender-focused transitivity studies make up a significant sub-strand; Abbas and Talaat (2019) explored headlines about crimes against women and in a subsequent strand of studies, transitivity was applied to the coverage of sexual and intimate partner violence (IPV) consistently showing material processes were more common and women were more frequently identified as Goal than Actor, thereby reinforcing the passive victimhood framing of the material (Akram & Yasmin, 2023; 2024; Akram et al., 2025).

These studies put together validate the utility of transitivity in the diagnostic process at the field level, but do not go beyond ideational analysis into tenor or mode.

Tenor: Mood, Modality and Appraisal

In the Pakistani media research, the focus has been on the analysis of interpersonal in editorials. This is an example of an appraisal-transitivity study, carried out by Qasim et al. (2021) that revealed an ideological polarization in the editorial reporting of the 2018 general election in four English-language dailies, demonstrating the correlation between attitude and graduation resources across the different outlets and in accordance with their political stance. Arain and Akram (2025) extended this line of thinking and claim that the two newspapers (Dawn and The Express Tribune) use declarative mood and calibrated modality to create a formal, impersonal reporting style whilst allowing evaluative colouring through lexical choice. Outside Pakistan, similar studies of newspaper editorials using appraisal-based approaches elsewhere have been found, implying that the approaches can be applied to South Asian English press (Banks, 2024). The coverage of vulnerable social groups has also been analysed in an evaluative manner, such as Course et al. (2024) who explored the representational trends regarding older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic, where the tenor resources of newspapers either brought sympathy, blame or marginalisation.

Thematic Progression and Cohesion

Mode is the least-developed metafunction in the study of newspaper SFL in South Asia. A review of thematic progression in opinion and editorial articles provided elsewhere reveals that constant-theme and zigzag patterns are attested to be used more often in maintaining coherence and reinforcing the argumentative focus of opinion and editorial articles (Thematic progression in opinion and editorial articles in Arab News, 2024). The research that deals with cohesion shows that cohesion in news discourse is influenced by reference cohesion, conjunction cohesion and lexical cohesion together with theme selection, which is a factor affecting the binding of clauses in coherent discourse (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). As a brief aside, Arain and Akram (2025) point out that rhemes and themes contribute to coherence and reader interest in the Pakistani newspapers, but this is not a comprehensive analysis and the role of mode in relation to field and tenor is under-theorized.

Research Gap

1. Methodologically, most of the reviewed studies are based on small samples which were manually coded from a single newspaper or a single event, and the corpus software is rarely used, except for the limited number of studies that used AntConc as a concordancing tool for manually coded categories and for frequency-based and collocation-based verification of the manually coded categories (Anthony, 2024).
2. There is no reviewed study that combines transitivity and mood/appraisal and thematic progression within a single register-based design in three major outlets of Pakistan, headline register and full-text register.
3. This literature thus lays strong groundwork for the individual metafunctional tools and confirms the integrative gap between spoken and written language, which is addressed in the present study, but also across individual outlets.

Methodology

The research design used in this study is mixed methods that combines qualitative research textual analysis and quantitative research corpus linguistics. The qualitative strand is based on Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) Systemic Functional Grammar to manually code clauses for transitivity, mood, modality and thematic structure, and the quantitative strand involves the use of corpus software to confirm frequency patterns in a larger corpus. This duality is useful for interpreting the news discourse at micro level and at the same time it is generalisable for the larger sample of Pakistani English news discourse.

This research is based on the theory of data analysis, which is the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) operationalized in three layers of analysis, namely, transitivity analysis (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) for field, mood, modality and appraisal analysis (Martin & White, 2005) for tenor, and thematic progression and cohesion analysis (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) for mode. The sampled texts are coded for process type, participant roles, circumstance (field), and mood choice, modality value, and appraisal category (tenor), as well as Theme-Rheme pattern and cohesive tie type (mode) in accordance with the previously used coding practices in the media studies conducted in Pakistan (Qasim et al., 2021; Arain & Akram, 2025).

Data collection is done in two phases. The first is a purposive sampling to form a headline corpus from the online editions of three Pakistani English-language newspapers. Second, full news reports and editorials are gathered from the same sources for the establishment of a written-register corpus for comparison with the spoken-register for the purpose of spoken-versus-written register comparison, as in Aslam et al. (2022).

The sample population consists of all the news content published in three national newspapers in Urdu in English (Dawn, The News International and The Express Tribune). They were chosen as the selected outlets due to their status as the top three most circulated English language newspapers in Pakistan and being used as reference outlets in previous SFL-based studies (Ekhteyar & Umrani, 2021; Qasim, 2024).

The written-register corpus is composed of 400 headlines (approx. 133–134 per newspaper) purposively selected over a fixed period of newspapers' publication across three newspaper categories: political, economic and social-affairs, and 60 full-length news reports and editorials (20 per newspaper), for a total of 460 texts. This sample size is to ensure that the manual coding is feasible, while at the same time being broad enough for generalisation to the corpus.

Triangulation of the manual coding with AntConc-based corpus analysis (Anthony, 2024) with frequencies, concordances and collocations scores for major transitivity, modality and cohesive markers validates the qualitative SFL coding, producing quantitative scores for the entire 460 text corpora.

Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter provides the analytical procedure applied on the 460-text corpus (400 headlines and 60 full-length reports/editorial) selected from Dawn, The News International and The Express

Tribune, following the sampling procedure set out in the Methodology. Analysis is done metafunction by metafunction: field is analyzed based on transitivity, tenor on mood, modality and appraisal, and mode on thematic progression and cohesion. Manual clause-level coding is done following the transitivity model by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and the appraisal model by Martin and White (2005), and is triangulated with the frequency and concordance analysis undertaken using AntConc (Anthony, 2024) to enhance the reliability of the qualitative categories. To account for the fact that the register continuum in the corpus can be split into condensed, headline, and more elaborately formulated, full-text register, the analysis is also organised according to the comparison-based logic set forth by Aslam et al. (2022). There are also illustrations throughout, in inverted commas, of what might be called 'samples' from the coded corpus, which were selected to illustrate recurring patterns, but not because they are statistical outliers.

Corpus Composition and Coding Scheme is proposed

The 400 headlines are spread out equally across the three newspapers, 133–134 per newspaper, and then further sorted by political, economic, and social-affairs categories, with the 60 full texts (20 per newspaper) serving as a point of comparison for written-register. Every clause was given a process type (material type, mental type, relational type, verbal type, behavioural type, existential type) and a mood type (declarative, interrogative, imperative, or exclamative). The modality value was assigned to each clause according to Halliday's cline of modalisation and modulation (high, median, or low value). The appraisal category was assigned to each clause: affect, judgement, or appreciation, with attitude marked as positive or negative. Thematic choices were categorized as topical, textual, or interpersonal Theme, and thematic progression was determined to be constant, linear, or derived-hypertheme, as modified in SFL from Danes. The coding scheme used was standardized for headlines as well as full texts to allow the direct register comparison.

Proposed Corpus Composition and Coding Scheme.

The most frequently occurring process type is material processes, as is appropriate with the action-oriented, event-reporting function of headlines, specifically. The material process (announces) is foregrounded by a clearly nominated Actor (Government) and Goal (relief package): this feature is prominent in The News International and Dawn's political reporting. Relational processes are also found in headlines of economic and CPEC news, with identifying and attributive clauses used to describe national projects such as the sample "CPEC remains a game-changer for regional trade. This can be paralleled with the studies conducted by Ekhteyar and Umrani (2021), and Manzoor and Yousaf (2023) which also reported a relational-process approach in the coverage of CPEC, and how the project was being constructed in a positive way.

Material and Relational Processes in Headlines versus Full Texts

When the whole texts of the headlines are compared with the texts to which they belong, there is a systematic difference: verbal and mental processes that are not present in the condensed text of the headlines are more numerous in the full text. The body text usually expands a headline like "Officials deny corruption charges" into a number of verbal-process clauses with direct and indirect speech (e.g., "the minister said that...", "sources claimed that...") and mental-process clauses (e.g., "officers believed that...", "officers intended that..."). This corroborates the

material action/field distinction of full texts, which are realized in reported speech and cognition, as found by Qasim (2024) in his comparative study of Pakistani and international headline framing in terms of transitivity. Gender and violence sub-samples reflect previous studies (Abbas & Talaat, 2019; Akram & Yasmin, 2023, 2024; Akram et al., 2025): material processes predominate, and women are often represented as Goal, not Actor, as in the sample "Woman shot dead over property dispute", where agency is grammatically attributed to the material process.

Tenor Analysis: Mood and Modality Patterns

The headlines and the full texts tend to be in declarative mood, showing that this mood is the most common in both, and fits the informational, assertive function of news discourse; interrogative and exclamative moods are almost entirely absent from headlines, which are only rarely encountered in opinion pieces where their rhetorical use was more than their informational one, as in the sample "Can Pakistan afford another loan?". The results of the modality analysis reveal that headlines are dominated by categorical and unmodalised expressions, whereas full texts, and editorials, use modal expressions such as modal verbs or modal particles in the median and low value range to hedge or to indicate uncertainty, such as the sample "The policy could potentially ease inflationary pressure". This is similar with the findings of Arain and Akram (2025) that modality and declarative mood work together to create a formal, impersonal mode of reporting in Dawn and The Express Tribune.

Tenor Analysis: Appraisal and Evaluative Stance

Headlines have far fewer appraisal signals than editorials, which provide clusters of appraisal and appreciation signals around political actors and national institutions. The explicit negative judgement is demonstrated in editorials, for example "The government's handling of the crisis was disappointingly slow," while appreciation resources, such as economic reporting, focus more on the processes and outcomes of a situation than on people, such as "A commendable step toward fiscal stability. This distribution is consistent with that of Qasim et al. (2021) that election-related editorials rely on graduated appraisal resources to establish a sense of ideological congruence and extends this pattern to economic and disaster-related coverage across the three outlets sampled.

Thematic Progression Patterns

The headlines are dominated by the simple topical Themes which present the main news actor or event, with little elaboration, which are used to mark the beginning of a text. By contrast, full texts have constant-Theme and zigzag (linear) progression patterns, with the Theme of one clause followed by the Rheme of the next, maintaining coherence from paragraph to paragraph, as in the sequence "The flood displaced thousands of families; now these families are sheltering in relief camps. The finding is in line with themed progression results obtained from similar opinion-article studies which also reported constant-Theme dominance in opinion-article genres such as argumentative journalistic genres.

Mode Analysis: Cohesion in Headlines and Full Texts

Analysis of cohesion, in the Halliday-Hasan taxonomy (1976) of reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion, reveals that the spatial constraints of the headlines leave little

room for other types of cohesion, with most relying almost exclusively on lexical cohesion and ellipsis, e.g. "Floods: Death toll rises to 50" (where the colon serves as a conjunctive ellipsis). Full texts use the full spectrum of cohesive devices, and conjunctive relations and reference chains (especially causal and additive) help to hold the paragraphs together. This confirms mode as the most sensitive metafunction to the spoken-written continuum in the corpus, as headlines pattern more towards the characteristics of the spoken register than the written register, which is also context-bound and compressed.

Quantitative Corpus Analysis (AntConc) and Cross-Newspaper Comparison

The frequency analysis was performed quantitatively using AntConc on the total 460-text corpus, in order to validate the manual coding. The relative frequency of the transitivity, modality and thematic categories in the headline sample (n = 400) of the three newspapers is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution (%) of Selected Register Features Across Headline Sub-Corpora (N = 400)

Register Feature	Dawn (n=134)	The News International (n=133)	The Express Tribune (n=133)	Overall (%)
Material processes	58.2	55.6	60.9	58.2
Relational processes	21.6	24.8	19.5	22.0
Verbal processes	12.7	11.3	13.5	12.5
Mental processes	5.2	6.0	4.5	5.2
High-value modality	9.0	7.5	11.3	9.3
Median/low-value modality	14.2	18.0	12.8	15.0
Constant Theme progression	47.8	44.4	51.1	47.8

The frequency distribution (in %) of selected register features in the headline sub-corpora (N = 400).

As Table 1 shows, the share of material processes is the highest among all three outlets, varying from 55.6% (The News International) to 60.9% (The Express Tribune), mirroring the overwhelming dominance of such processes at the field level as outlined in Section 4.3. The News International (24.8%) is comparatively higher as a result of showing a slightly stronger identifying/attributive orientation in its economic and CPEC related coverage when compared with the other outlets in the relational processes. The Express Tribune appears to favour categorical writers with more higher modality (11.3%), while other outlets appear to be more cautious, with The News International having the highest percentage of writers using medium/low modality (18.0%). Constant-Theme progression is the most common type of progression in The Express Tribune (51.1%), which shows that coherence is more likely to be achieved by thematic reiteration in the shorter format of a headline. Results from each of these quantitative patterns support, and do not contradict, the qualitative results of Sections 4.3–4.8, providing convergent validity for the mixed-methods design.

Synthesis: Register Configuration across Field, Tenor, and Mode

Overall, field, tenor and mode analyses point to a unified profile of the register of Pakistani English newspapers. The material-process and the declarative mood, the relationship-minimal and the relationship-maximal modality, and the appraisal resources concentrated in the editorial text are the hallmarks of Field; the use of declarative mood, the modality that is restricted, and the appraisal resources that are concentrated in the editorial text are the hallmarks of tenor; the sharp shift from ellipsis to fullness in event reporting, and from a lexically cohesive compression to a fuller conjunctive and referential cohesion, with constant and zigzag thematic progression in economic and CPEC-related coverage are the hallmarks of mode. The quantitative data from AntConc (Table 1) also show some slight but consistent differences across newspapers, with The Express Tribune opting for more action-oriented, categorical headlines, and The News International for more hedged, relationally framed headlines. In this integrated register configuration, the thesis statement of Pakistani English newspapers has been substantiated by extending the single-metafunction studies conducted by Ekhteyar & Umrani (2021); Qasim et al. (2021); Akram & Yasmin (2023, 2024); Arain & Akram (2025) to a single, unified account of register variation on the continuum from spoken to written in the case of news media in Pakistan.

Findings

This analysis of 460 texts uncovers a coherent and metafunctionally-integrated register profile of Pakistani English newspaper discourse, which is systematic and varies across the register divide of the newspaper headline versus full text and across the newspapers Dawn, The News International and The Express Tribune. The field level findings reveal that the coding for material processes significantly outnumbers the other types of processes overall, with 58.2% of news headlines in Pakistani language reporting material processes overall, confirming that the Pakistani newspaper headlines predominantly report events or actions and not conditions or thoughts. The Express Tribune has the highest occurrence of material processes (60.9%) indicating more action oriented headline style, and The News International has comparatively higher occurrence of relational processes (24.8%) especially in economic and CPEC coverage, clauses characterise and identify national projects in favourable terms, instead of reporting on actions. Gender- and violence-related headlines were similar to those found in previous studies, and women were often represented as Goal, rather than Agent, and agency was often grammatically backgrounded in the reporting of violence against women.

In the level of the tenor, the declarative mode is the most prevailing in both headlines and complete news texts, which express the assertive, information-bestowing role of news discourse, with the interrogative and exclamative modes being almost exclusively limited to opinion pieces for rhetorical purposes rather than for genuine questions or exclamations. Modality analysis reveals that there is a distinct register shift, with the headlines preferring modalised and high-value assertions and full texts, as well as editorials, using modal expressions with a median level of modality and medium or low value to hedge and attribute uncertainty to sources. The Express Tribune has the most high value modality (11.3%), whereas The News International has the most hedged, median/low value modality (18.0%) suggesting a more cautious tone in the editorial voice. Appraisal analysis also reveals that the headlines are mostly appraisal-free and editorials focus their judgement resources onto political actors, and their appreciation resources to

economic processes and outcomes, confirming the earlier results on the ideologically inflected evaluative stance in Pakistani editorials.

Headlines use almost exclusively lexical cohesion and ellipsis because of space restrictions, while, though written text, they pattern more like spoken, context-based discourse, and full texts use the full spectrum of cohesive devices, specifically causal and additive conjunction and extended chains of references. Thematic progression analysis reveals that headlines tend to present simple, unelaborated topical Themes, and full texts are characterized by constant-Theme and zigzag progression patterns which maintain paragraph-level coherence. Constant-Theme progression has been most common in *The Express Tribune* (51.1%), suggesting a greater degree of coherence through thematic reiteration even in the brevity of headlines.

Taken together, these findings support the view that field, tenor and mode do not stand alone and map onto distinct written registers but rather co-pattern into some recognizable register configurations: an action-oriented, categorically asserted, ellipsis-dependent headline register, and a more relationally elaborated, hedged, cohesively fuller written register. The variation between the two newspapers though comparatively small is consistent and directionally significant between *The Express Tribune*, which favors action-oriented, categorical, thematically reiterative headlines, and *The News International*, which favors relationally framed, hedged headlines. The results support the core argument of this study, which confirmed the systematic and interrelated register variation across the outlets and across spoken-written continuum in Pakistani English newspapers, and confirmed that it is an integrated Hallidayan account of the findings of previous studies on Pakistani media.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore the register variation in the discourse of Pakistani English newspaper using the framework of Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), elaborating the field variation in terms of transitivity, tenor variation in terms of mood, modality, and appraisal, and mode variation in terms of thematic progression and cohesion from a purposive sample of 400 headlines and 60 full-length reports and editorials from *Dawn*, *The News International*, and *The Express Tribune*. It did so by filling a real need for comprehensive examination of the three metafunctions in a single study, across multiple outlets and multiple events; which was not the approach taken by previous research in the Pakistani media—examining one of the three metafunctions, in one outlet, or in one event.

The results show that the Pakistani English news discourse has the coherent and consistent register architecture. When it comes to material processes in the event-driven headline reporting, Field is organised in this way, while relational processes start to come to the fore in the economic and CPEC-related reporting. The main features of Tenor are the use of declarative mood and a strong emphasis of modality in editorial language, but not in headlines, reflecting the communicative purpose of these text types. While the register contrast is less pronounced in the two other metafunctions, in Mode the ellipsis effect and the inventory of lexical cohesion are the most significant features, and the extent of them is remarkably similar to that in spoken discourse, even though the texts are written; in the full-text function the entire range of cohesive features and more complex thematic progression patterns are at play, allowing a longer stretch of text to be kept coherent.

Importantly, these patterns of metafunctions are not consistent in outlets. The Express Tribune consistently features a more action-oriented and categorically asserted and thematically reiterative headline style, while The News International has a more relationally framed and hedged style, with Dawn's in-between. Although small in size, this cross-newspaper variation is directionally similar across transitivity, modality and thematic progression measures, thus supporting the argument that each newspaper develops a recognisable but subtle register identity in the context of shared conventions of the Pakistani English journalism.

Theoretically, the data reveals the superiority of the integrated Hallidayan register model, which is superior to single-metafunction approaches, namely field, tenor, and mode, for this study because the field, tenor and mode were shown to co-vary which mutually reinforces, that is, the choices of transitivity of action-type and categorical modality and ellipsis cohesion are clustered in the headline register, while the choices of elaboration of a relation and hedged modality and fuller cohesion are clustered in the written register. This supports Matthiessen's (2019) view that register is best conceptualised as a multi-stratal, systematic configuration of different linguistic features rather than as an assemblage of stand-alone linguistic features.

The mixed methods approach (manual coding of SFL and corpus verification with AntConc) was useful in providing triangulation of qualitative interpretation and quantitative reliability, thus providing a replicable methodology for future register-related media studies in the context of English in South Asia. Although the scope of the corpus and time frame restrict the generalisability of the findings, the present study offers both a solid and empirically sound basis for understanding how meaning is created in the Pakistani English newspapers as a continuum of the spoken and written modes and gives clear directions for the further extension of the integrated register framework to broadcast, digital and social media news discourse in Pakistan.

Recommendations

1. Further studies are required to be extended to broadcast and digital discourse of Pakistani news such as television tickers and social media headlines in this integrated field-tenor mode.
2. More extensive longitudinal corpora need to be created to document changes of register over time, especially in relation to significant political or economic changes.
3. To investigate the variation in the register of Urdu/English, the Urdu language newspapers should be included in comparative study.
4. Manual-coding time should be reduced and corpus size should be expanded by developing automated SFL-tagging tools.
5. There is a need for a program of journalism education to include awareness of registers so as to encourage an equitable and transparent evaluative language in journalism.

References

1. Abbas, M. A., & Talaat, M. (2019). Transitivity analysis of newspapers' news-headlines depicting crime committed against women in Pakistan. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 9(5), 400–414. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v9n5p400>
2. Akram, N., & Yasmin, M. (2023). Sexual violence against women: Global interventions and an evidence from Pakistan. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 97, Article 102691. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2023.102691>

3. Akram, N., & Yasmin, M. (2024). Media portrayal of sexual violence in Pakistan: A critical discourse analysis of the Lahore-Sialkot motorway incident. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 106, Article 102955. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2024.102955>
4. Akram, N., Yasmin, M., & Sohail, A. (2025). Perpetuation of rape myths through news reporting on intimate partner violence: A transitivity analysis of Asma Aziz case. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 109, Article 103038. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2025.103038>
5. Anthony, L. (2024). *AntConc* (Version 4.3.1) [Computer software]. Waseda University. <https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software>
6. Arain, F., & Akram, A. (2025). A sociolinguistic exploration of language use and representation in Pakistani English newspapers. *Contemporary Journal of Social Science Review*, 3(4), 149–162.
7. Aslam, M., Yasmin, M., & Aslam, S. (2022). A corpus-based comparative ideational meta-functional analysis of Pakistani English and UK English newspaper editorials on COVID-19. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 9(1), Article 2114619. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2022.2114619>
8. Banks, D. (2024). Systemic functional linguistics: Advances and applications. *Journal of World Languages*, 10(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jwl-2023-0083>
9. Course, S., Koç, F. S., & Saka, F. Ö. (2024). Representation of older adults in Turkish newspaper reports during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 69, Article 101232. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2024.101232>
10. Eggins, S. (2004). *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics* (2nd ed.). Continuum.
11. Ekhteyar, A., & Umrani, T. (2021). CPEC in Pakistani print media: Transitivity analysis of English newspapers' articles. *Progressive Research Journal of Arts & Humanities*, 3(1), 157–170. <https://doi.org/10.51872/prjah.vol3.iss1.93>
12. Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. Longman.
13. Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.). Routledge.
14. Kiran, F., & Akhter, F. (2024). Media advocacy on health hazards of CPEC's coal power project: The Sustainable Development Goal#3 is under threat. *Pakistan Journal of Applied Social Sciences*, 14(2), 79–92. <https://doi.org/10.46568/pjass.v14i2.746>
15. Manzoor, A., & Yousaf, Z. (2023). Economic spheres! Media framing of CPEC in Pakistan. *Journal of Media and Entrepreneurial Studies*, 65–75. <https://doi.org/10.56536/jmes.v3i.34>
16. Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Palgrave Macmillan.
17. Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2019). Register in systemic functional linguistics. *Register Studies*, 1(1), 10–41. <https://doi.org/10.1075/rs.18010.mat>
18. Qasim, H. M. (2024). Beyond words: A corpus-based investigation of cultural sides through transitivity patterns in Pakistani and international newspapers' headlines concerning Oceangate submarine. *Inception-Journal of Languages and Literature*.
19. Qasim, H. M., Sibtain, M., & Nawaz, M. S. (2021). An appraisal-transitivity analysis of editorials on the results of general elections-2018 in Pakistan. *Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 8(2), 95–115. <https://doi.org/10.52015/jrss.8i2.57>

20. Zaidi, S. B. (2019). Peace sociolinguistics: A constructivist grounded theory of Pakistani English newspapers. *NUML Journal of Critical Inquiry*, 17(1), 20–38.
<https://doi.org/10.52015/numljci.v17i1.184>