



# NATIONAL ANTHEMS AS BASIS FOR NATION BUILDING: A COMPARATIVE TEXTUAL MEANING ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NATIONAL ANTHEMS

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## ABSTRACT

This work is about the textual comparative analysis of two selected national anthems, notably the Central African and Equatorial Guinean national anthems. The term textual refers to the grammar of textual meaning which focuses one of the three levels of language use: the interpersonal, the experiential and the textual. The textual function theory has been applied to the above-mentioned texts. In fact, the linguistic components have been identified in the texts split into clauses, and these have been analyzed both the quantitatively and the qualitatively bases. Put another way, the work uses the mixed research method principles. The results show that circumstantial elements are more thematized in the text of Central Africa, followed by *call-to-action* whereas the Guinean text puts the accent on *call-to-action* and *people*. Interpersonal Themes are infrequently used in the two texts while textual ones ensure a coherent articulation of the messages. It is through such thematic choices that the authors of the two texts formulate crucial aspirations of unity, freedom and dignity as basic values for nation building.

**Keywords:** grammar of textual meaning, mixed research method, national anthems, values, nation building.

## RÉSUMÉ

Ce travail de recherche porte sur l'analyse comparative de la signification textuelle dans quelques hymnes nationaux, notamment les hymnes centrafricains et Equato-Guinéen. Le terme textuel fait allusion à la grammaire de la signification textuelle qui met l'accent sur l'un des trois niveaux de la langue, à savoir les niveaux expérientiel, interpersonnel et textuel. La théorie de la fonction textuelle a été appliquée aux hymnes susmentionnés. En fait, les éléments textuels ont été identifiés dans les textes divisés en propositions et ceux-ci sont

analysés à la fois sur le plan quantitatif et qualitatif. En d'autres termes, l'analyse est faite sur la base de la méthode mixte. Les résultats montrent que les éléments circonstanciels ont été thématisés dans le texte de la Centrafrique suivis de l'appel à l'action tandis que dans le texte Equato-Guinéen, l'accent est mis sur *l'appel à l'action et le peuple*. Les Thèmes interpersonnels sont rarement utilisés dans les deux textes et la cohérence des messages est réalisée à travers les Thèmes textuels. C'est par le biais d'une telle thématisation que les auteurs de deux textes formulent les aspirations essentielles en termes d'unité, de liberté et de dignité, qui sont des valeurs fondamentales pour la construction d'une nation.

**Mots clés** : grammaire de la signification textuelle, méthode mixte, hymnes nationaux, valeurs, construction de la nation.

## INTRODUCTION

National anthems are lyrical songs to the glory of peoples; but beyond their melodic and folkloric representative function, they carry some values, views and aspirations specific to a people, just as flags, mottoes and constitutions do. Silaghi-Dumitrescu (2020) identifies the following main topics in his analysis of national anthems: ancestry, past, beauty, build, work, country name, courage, democracy, enemy, ethnicity, family, man, woman, fight, flag, future, geographical references, etc. These are actually the principal experiences of nations. National anthems are not trivial or ordinary songs, but they play an important role in the shaping peoples' ideology by highlighting the most important aspirations. Similarly, Onditi (2018) emphasizes their importance when he states that they are not only a symbol of unity but they also define the identity of a people. The notions of unity and identity cannot be taken for granted in the building of a national. Some clear and intelligent tools are to be designed either through texts or symbols so as to create good conditions for various ethnic groups or peoples to live peacefully together and build their nation (Rahimi, 2015).

Language is therefore an efficient means to construct ideologies as explained by Peter, Benjamin, & Nicolas, (2020): **Continents, international organizations, nations, political parties and other institutions are bonded by their commonality of core values and mission articulated through language use** (p. 74). As a matter of fact, the function of language has been theorized by Halliday (1973, 1978, 1985a). He is the founding father of Systemic Functional Linguistics. This linguistic Theory contends that language can be analyzed as a message, as a representation of human experience and as an exchange. These correspond to the three functions of language which are the textual, the interpersonal and the experiential functions. This work stresses the textual function of language through the Analysis of the Equatorial Guinean and Central African national anthems. The analyses of national anthems usually focus on linguistic devices such as cohesive devices, deictic expressions, figures of speech, content words and clauses

(Peter et al., 2020). The current research presupposes that the exploration of textual patterns can reveal relevant meanings as regards nation building. Thus, the work meticulously describes or analyses the different Themes in the texts under consideration in order to interpret them.

## 1. Theoretical Background

### 1.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic Functional Linguistics is a theory coined by Halliday (1973, 1978, 1985a), who affirms that language is a complex semiotic system structured to convey three distinct and complementary types of meanings. It is systemic because language is a semiotic system or a system of signs; it is functional because language has many functions: a representation of human experiences, a message, and an exchange. In other words, language has three functions: textual, interpersonal and experiential.

### 1.2 The Textual Functional of Language

The textual function of language is about the organization of some meanings into a message. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), the text or clause, in all languages, has some form of internal organization whereby it fits in with, and contributes to, the flow of discourse. This is realized through the thematic structure. The clause has two parts: Theme and Rheme. In English the Theme or the element which serves as the point of departure of the message is put first whereas the Rheme, which is the part in which the Theme is developed, comes after. This order is not the same in all languages; it varies from one language to another. There are three types of themes: topical, interpersonal and textual:

- ✓ A Topical Theme is the constituent of the clause which has a Transitivity function such as actor, behavior, senser, carrier, circumstantial elements (place, time, etc.);
- ✓ An Interpersonal Theme is the element of the message to which a Mood function can be assigned: finite (in interrogative mood) and adjuncts (vocative, mood, comment, polarity);
- ✓ A Textual Theme is a component of the clause which has a cohesive function such as Continuity Adjuncts and Conjunctive Adjuncts.

Halliday et al. (2004) define another level of thematic organization which they call Theme markedness and unmarkedness. An unmarked Theme is a "typical" or "usual" Theme while a marked Theme means simply "atypical" or "unusual" (Eggins, 1994).

An unmarked Theme is a Theme which is part of the Mood constituents of the clause such as Subject, Finite, Predicator, WH elements. As for a marked Theme, it is a Theme which corresponds to any other constituents from the Mood system. They are usually circumstantial elements.

## 2. Methods

This work is carried on the basis of the mixed-method approach. It is a research methodology which combines multiple methods to tackle research issues in a suitable and rational manner, and this involves gathering, scrutinizing, explicating and enunciation both qualitative and quantitative data (Dawadi, Shrestha, & Giri, 2021, Doyle, Brady & Byrne, 2009). Actually, the method consists in combining qualitative and quantitative findings in order to get more insights.

This work analyzes the Central African and Equatorial Guinean national anthems using the mixed research method principles. The texts are selected on the qualitative basis in central Africa where peoples have more or less the same political and economic experiences. The two texts are split into analyzable items called clauses. The Themes types are described quantitatively in these units and the statistics related to occurrence of Themes are thoroughly presented in tables. It must be made clear that the term clause used here is different from the one used in traditional grammar. It means a linguistic unit in which a Theme can be identified. The Themes elements are thoroughly described on the quantitative basis whereas the analysis is executed on both the quantitative and the qualitative bases.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Quantitative Analysis of Themes in the Central African National Anthem

Table 1 summarizes the occurrence of the different Themes in the Central African national anthem. The sign + represents a Theme whereas the sign - shows its absence. The number of pluses equals the number of Themes under each Theme type.

**Table 1:** Theme description of Central African Republic national anthem

Number	Themes	Textual	Interpersonal	Topical
1	<u>O CENTRAL AFRICA, O CRADLE OF BANTOUS</u> <u>Take back</u>	+	+	+
2	<u>Long time</u>	-	-	+
3	<u>long time</u>		-	+

4	<u>But from this day</u>	+	-	+
5	<u>in order and dignity You</u>	-	-	+
6	<u>And for passing this new step</u>	+	-	+
7	<u>At work in order and dignity,</u>	+	-	+
8	<u>Brandishing</u>	-	-	+
Total		4(50%)	1(12,5%)	8(100%)

First, it can be noted that the Central African national anthem is very short but this does not mean it lacks some relevance. Table 1 reveals that there are 8/8 topical Themes in the text under analysis, corresponding to 100%. They highlight the main experiences in terms of effort and actions but also in terms of circumstances of manner and time. There are 4/8 textual Themes, that is 5%, which contributes to create a coherent articulation of the main experiences whereas the only interpersonal Theme (1/8, representing 12,5%) emphasizes the affective attitude of the Central African people towards their nation.

### 3.2 Quantitative Analysis of Themes in the Equatorial Guinean national Anthem

Table 2 describes the occurrence of the different Theme types in the Equatorial Guinean national anthem.

**Table 2:** Theme description of the Equatorial Guinean national anthem

Number	Themes	Themes		
		Textual	Interpersonal	Topical
1	<u>Let us</u>			
2	<u>Let us</u>	-	-	+
3	<u>In brotherhood</u>	-	-	+
4	<u>After two centuries</u>	-	-	+
5	<u>Let us</u>	-	-	+
6	<u>Defend</u>	-	-	+
7	<u>Sing</u>	-	-	+
8	<u>And ALWAYS preserve</u>	+	+	+
9	<u>Let us</u>	-	-	+
10	<u>Defend</u>	-	-	+
11	<u>Sing</u>	-	-	+
12	<u>And ALWAYS preserve</u>	+	+	+
13	<u>And we</u>	+	-	+
14	<u>We</u>	-	-	+
15	<u>And we</u>	+	-	+
16	<u>We</u>	-	-	+
Total		4(25%)	2(12,5%)	16(100%)

Contrary to the Central African Republic national anthem, the Equatorial Guinean national anthem is longer. There are 16 clauses, that is, 16 Themes. Each clause must contain a Topical Theme; therefore, the table discloses 16/16 topical Themes, which corresponds to 100%. This means that some important experiences are described. In other words, the text is about actors, actions, circumstances, etc. Table 2 also shows that textual Themes are used 4 out of 16 times, corresponding to 25% whereas interpersonal ones occur 2/16, that is, 12, 5%. It can be inferred that ideas or experiences are well developed in terms of coherence and that judgements related to certainty or probability are expressed.

Table 3 highlights Theme markedness in the Two texts. The marked Themes are identified with the number of clauses in which they occur, and the statistics about their occurrence are clearly specified.

**Table 3:** Theme markedness

Anthems	Number (Marked)	Total Marked	Total Unmarked
Central Africa Republic	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	6(75%)	2(25%)
Equatorial Guinea	3, 4	2(12,5%)	14(87,5%)

The table displays a significant number of marked Themes in the text of the Central African national anthem. There are 6 out of 8 marked Themes, which represents 75%. This implies that specific and important circumstances of place and time are intentionally emphasized in the text. But in the text of Equatorial Guinean national anthem there are only 2 out of 16, corresponding to 12,5% marked Themes, meaning that the text does not really stress circumstantial elements; but rather, it underlines the roles and duties of Guineans as the main actors of their future. Two basic circumstances are accentuated: *in brotherhood, after two centuries* in clauses (3, 4).

Table 4 recapitulates the thematized experiences in the two texts under analysis.

**Table 4:** Themes distribution

Anthems	People/Country	Call-to-action	Values	Other (circumstances of time and places)
Central Africa Republic	1	1, 5, 7	7	2, 3, 4, 6
Total	1(12,5%)	3(37,5%)	1(12,5%)	4(50%)
Equatorial Guinea	13, 14, 15, 16	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12	3	4
Total	4(25%)	10(62,5%)	1(6,25%)	1(6,25%)

The above table highlights four (4) items which are used as Themes in the two texts: *people/country*, *call-to-action*, *values* and *other*. *Other* represents circumstances of places and times which contribute to clarify the experiences or actions described in the anthems. In the Central African national anthem, circumstances are more thematized than the other components. They are used four times (50%) in clauses (2, 3, 4, 6) whereas *Value* is used only once and so is *people*. *Call-to- action* crops up three times (37, 5%). As far as the Equatorial Guinean national anthem is concerned, the accent is put on *call-to-action* used ten times as Themes in clause (1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12), corresponding to 62,5%, and on *people/country* used four times in clauses (13, 14, 15, 16, corresponding to 25%). *Value* and *other* are rarely used in thematic position. They occur once each.

#### **4. Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings**

This section deals with quantitative and qualitative analysis of the two national anthems. As far as the Central African national anthems is concerned, the analysis reveals that it contains 8 topical Themes and that the most topicalized items are circumstances of time and manner in clauses (2, 3, 4, 6), corresponding to 50%. The writer has emphasized some basic circumstantial elements: *long time*, *from this day* and *in the respect of right*. This implies that the text is well studied and that words are carefully chosen to express crucial experiences. These experiences are very disagreeable insofar as they are related to tyranny and slavery. The author reminds the Central African people about their past so as to call them to action in clauses such as *take back your right*, *at work*, *in order and dignity* in clauses (1, 5, 7, that is, 37,5%). The painful circumstances or events expressed through Themes justify the above essential actions. The respect of right, dignity and unity in clause (7) are the main values which will make the actions possible. Thus, the choice of Themes reflects the main preoccupations of the nation which are actually about freedom, unity and work. The only topical Theme used in clause (1) describes the Central African people attitude towards the cradle land of Bantous. It is paramount to be patriot if they are to achieve the above values. The text is coherently developed through enhancement items (*and*) in clauses (1, 4, 6, 7).

The text of the Equatorial Guinean national anthem is longer as explained earlier. The analysis uncovers sixteen clauses, the double of the number of clauses in the text of the Central African national anthem. Consequently, the Guinean text contains sixteen topical Themes, and the stressed items are *people* in clauses (13, 14, 15, 16) equivalent to 25% and *call-to-action* in clauses (1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, representing 62,5%). Circumstances and values are infrequently thematized. This indicates that *call-to-action* is at the center of the message conveyed through the Guinean text, and this is

exemplified in clauses such as *let us tread the path of our immense happiness, defend our freedom, and always preserve the unity*, etc. (1, 6, 12). Independence is a source of happiness and therefore it must be cherished and preserved through specific actions. Two fundamental circumstances are accentuated through marked Themes in clauses (3, 4): *in brotherhood, after two centuries of being subjected under colonial rule*. This justifies the actions that must be taken by *people* as stated earlier in clauses (13, 14, 15, 16) in order to preserve certain values. The author seems to be really marked by colonial experiences which, as described in many documents (Cesaire, 2000), was very harrowing. There are two topical Themes in the text of Guinea: *and always preserve* in clauses (8, 12), meaning that at all times and on all occasions the people of Guinea must take useful actions. Textual Themes crop up four times in clauses (8, 12, 13, 15), ensuring a meaningful elaboration of the message.

## CONCLUSION

Two national anthems, notably the Guinean and the Central African national anthems, have been analyzed on the basis of the systemic functional linguistic approach. The analysis has revealed some similarities and differences in the two texts. Both texts emphasize call-to-actions against the backdrop of painful colonial experiences the peoples had gone through. The authors of the two texts urge their peoples to draw lessons from this and to take appropriate actions. While the Central African text puts the accent on significant circumstances related to colonization, the Guinean text actually prioritizes *people* to whom it gives relevant orientations in terms of actions to preserve unity and freedom. In fact, the main message of the two texts is about freedom, unity and dignity. But these critical values are not actually taken account of considering what is happening in Central Africa and in Guinea where there is no real democracy and development. African countries adopt relevant texts which are not usually implemented. National anthems convey important values and orientations, visions or values, which can efficiently contribute in building strong and self-assured nations if these are enforced.

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