

A Systemic Functional Linguistic Analysis of Deception in British News Reports

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Abstract

This study investigates deception in British news reports from a systemic functional linguistics perspective. It discusses the concept of deception as well as its strategies in British news reports. It aims at: identifying metafunction and its three strands in the chosen data, investigating the major strategies of deception that are exploited to express deception through the chosen data. It hypothesizes that the three strands of metafunction are realized in the selected data and concealment, falsification, distortion and depersonalization are the most frequent strategies found in the data. The Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics is adopted as a model to analyze the structure and function of language unified with the strategies of deception. The analysis validates the hypotheses above.

Keywords: experiential metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, textual Metafunction, concealment, falsification.

المستخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في الخداع المستخدم في الأخبار البريطانية من منظور اللغويات الوظيفية النظامية إضافة إلى ذلك تدرس مفهوم الخداع والكشف عن الاستراتيجيات المعبرة عنه. وتستقصي الدراسة الأهداف الآتية: التعرف على مفهوم الخداع والإشارة إلى الاستراتيجيات التي وُظفت للتعبير عن الخداع ضمن النصوص الإخبارية المختارة، إيجاد الوظائف الثلاث (الفكرية، الشخصية، والنصية) التي استخدمت في تركيب الجمل التي تحتوي على الخداع في نصوص الأخبار البريطانية. تفترض الدراسة أن وظائف اللغة الثلاث موجودة ضمن العينة المختارة من النصوص الإخبارية البريطانية، وأن أهم استراتيجيات الخداع المستخدمة هي إخفاء بعض المعلومات، التزوير، التشويه، نزع الشخصية. اعتماد نظرية علم اللغة الوظيفي النظامي المقترح من قبل هالدي (٢٠١٤) كموديل لتحليل الوظيفة والتركيب اللغوي للاستراتيجيات المستخدمة في الخداع.

1. Introduction

People have to correlate language with its context and function in order to understand the speaker's meaning. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is able to achieve this task because the method of this model of language can explain the relationship between the texts for perception of the meaning intended. According to Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) theory of SFL, language is employed to understand meaning. Each function has its distinct meaning; they are experiential, interpersonal and textual meaning termed 'metafunction'. Those three metafunctions form the structure of the clause.

For Mahon (2007:189), deception is an intentional act that causes another person to have or continue to have a false belief that is known or truly believed to be false by bringing about evidence on the basis of which the person has or continues to have the false belief. Deception as Dynel (2018:225) defines " is equated with production of message that pivot on covert untruthfulness, i.e.untruthfulness unavailable to the target or victim who must be a hearer ". Due to its widespread social use in specific situations especially in news, deception is extremely important in linguistics. This study tries to find answers to the following questions:

- 1.What are the components of metafunction that could be realized in the data?
- 2.How are the major strategies of deception used to express deception in the chosen data ?
- 3.How are the three simultaneous strands of meaning (ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions) expressed in clause structures of deception in British news reports?

2- Systemic Functional Linguistics

According to Fontaine (2013:5), Halliday considers language as a type of semiotic system and it is a system that is organized systematically. Language serves as a resource for speakers to create meaning. The basic principle of organizing meaning in language is through its function, while the structure of linguistic expression is essential for conveying the intended meaning. In (SFL), the process of creating meaning through language is based on pattern. Language is structured as a system of options which enables speakers to select relevant options and creates meaning. The structure of language is considered a less important character since it is realized as "the outward form taken by systemic choices, not as the defining characteristic of language" (Halliday and Matthiessen,2004:23).

In accordance with Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014:20-23) research, composition, stratification, instantiation, metafunction, and axis are essential theoretical concepts that form the framework of a language. The composition aspect of language pertains to the arrangement of words, including syntagmatic order (structure) and paradigmatic order (system). Syntagmatic order refers to the patterns in word combinations, and paradigmatic ordering pertains to patterns in word substitutions. Based on Matthiessen, Teruya, and Lam (2010:205), language can be viewed as a global dimension ordering, which consists of subsystems classified into different levels called 'strata'. These strata are related by realization and represent an order of symbolic abstraction along the hierarchy. It is essential to note that stratification differs from rank. Rank represents a hierarchy based on abstraction. For instance, a text is composed of clauses which are comprised of groups and phrases. The strata in the organization of language include semantics, lexicogrammar, phonology, and phonetics. Context is interpreted as a stratum above language.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 280) think that language has a dual function. It can be viewed as a system that creates meaning and as a text that uses this potential. The system

represents the underlying structure of a language, while the text is actual manifestation of this structure. The connection between these two is made through a process called instantiation. Matthiessen, Teruya, and Lam (2010:138) suggest that language has evolved to serve highly generalized functions reflected in its organization. Halliday identifies three metafunctions in both the levels of semantics and grammar. It is impossible to export transitivity from grammar into semantics from transitivity already occupies this area.

2.1 Metafunctions

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014:3), a language user produces text when he writes, speaks, or signs. Text is a product of the process of meaning, as defined by Halliday (1982:209). For text linguists, the main concern is how speakers or writers deconstruct text into component units, and what meaning processes go through to generate text. Halliday suggests that there are several similarities between a clause and a text, including structure, coherence, function, development, and character. By following the guidelines provided by SFL, a text can be broken into its constitutive parts. To understand language, we need to abide by Halliday's principle that "text is the process of meaning". This principle implies that the three key aspects of language are ideational, interpersonal, and textual. These three metafunctions are crucial to understand the meaning behind any piece of language (Ghadessy, 1999: 130).

2.1.1 Ideational Metafunction

The systemic functional linguistics framework proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) suggests that meaning can be divided into two elements: experiential function with clause, and logical function between clauses in a clause complex (Eggins, 2004:206). Sinar (2002:40) explains that the transitivity system of language expresses experiential or representational function through clauses. Halliday (1985:101) clarifies that transitivity defines different types of processes that exist in language and the structures used to convey them. A process has three components: the process itself, the participants in the process, and the circumstances associated with it. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) classify transitivity into six processes, mental, material, behavioral, relational, verbal, and existential. Each of these processes has its participants as illustrated in Table (1). Additionally, Halliday (1994:151) proposes nine main types of circumstantial elements: extent, location, manner, cause, contingency, accompaniment, role, matter, angle.

Table (1) Types of Processes

Process	Participant
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2.1.2

mental	actor, goal
material	senser, phenomenon
behavioral	behavioural , range
relational	carrier, attribute token, value
verbal	sayer, target
existential	Existent

Interpersonal Metafunction

Eggins (2004:144) states that the second meaning of the clause is an exchange of its interpersonal meanings, and it can realize social relationships with other language users. When we communicate using language, we establish a relationship between ourselves and the person we interact with. This is done by taking turns speaking and assuming different speech roles throughout the exchange. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014:107) suggest two fundamental speech roles from the basis for all other role types. These two roles are (i) giving and (ii) demanding. However, there is another equally fundamental distinction that cuts across this basic dichotomy, which is related to the nature of commodity being exchanged. Such commodity can be either (a) good- and services or (b) information. In addition, when analyzing language, the interpersonal metafunction involves breaking down a clause into two components: mood and residue. Mood, is a nominal group and the finite which is the first element of the verb group, that functions as the subject of a sentence. The residue comprises of the predictor, which the remainder of the verbal group, along with complements and adjuncts.

2.1.3 Textual Metafunction

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 64) state that the third lines of meaning in SFL give the clause its feature as message. Thematic structure carries this line of meaning. According to Eggins (2004:296), the clause is divided into two functional components: the theme, which serves as the message's starting point, and the rheme, which provides new information about the theme. Theme system plays a central role. For Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 67), when speaking, the theme of the clause is often separated by creating a distinct tone group especially when the theme is an adverbial group, prepositional phrase, or a nominal group that does not function as a subject.

3. Deception

Most of researchers like Krauss et al. (1976: 2) define deception, " an act that is intended to foster in another person a belief or understanding which the deceiver considers false.". Based

on this definition, Zuckerman et al. (1981:3) suggest two characteristics for deception. The first one has a double nature, comprising both the communication of certain information and a metacommunication about the honesty of the message. Second, deception is an intentional and conscious act that is directed at another person. Vrij (2000: 15) considers deception as “a successful or unsuccessful deliberate attempt, without forewarning, to create in another a belief which the communicator considers to be untrue.”. Knapp et al. (2016:11) observe that the definition of deception is "the way people perceive certain features of communicative acts in context." It means what sets up deception in everyday interactions varies based on the set of circumstances surrounding a particular situation or event, and is built on communicators' perceptions of different factors such as intent and consequences. The researcher's definition is that a sender communicates intentionally to engender a receiver's belief to gain an advantage. To deceive means the act of withholding information purposely to get the benefit.

3.1 Faces of Deception

Galasiński (2000:22) states that active and passive deception are the two most common distinctions within deceptive communication. Active deception involves the utterance of false information, while passive deception involves withholding authentic and relevant information, leading the addressee to believe a belief (or a set of beliefs) that does not represent the whole (relevant) picture of reality. Active deceivers say something to make the receivers believe something. On the other hand, passive deceivers do not prevent the addressee from acquiring a belief. For Lee (2019:801), deception by omission, which contains withholding information, is considered more acceptable than deception by commission, that includes falsifying information because deception by omission is easier to conceal and presents a lower risk of being caught.

3.2 Kinds of Deception

Ortony and Gupta (2019:152-3) mention that Chisholm and Feehan (1977) identify two sets of four sorts of deception distinguished in terms of the intent of the deceiver to either cause (i.e., deception by commission) or permit (i.e., deception by omission) someone else to (1) gain a false belief, (2) continue to maintain false belief, (3) stop to hold a true belief, or (4) be prevented from getting a true belief. Focusing on Chisholm and Feehan's four kinds of deception by commission, whereby S (intentionally) contributes causally to the desired belief state in H rather than in contexts of deception by omission, in which S "just" permits the establishing or maintenance of a false belief by, for example, failing to take a chance to correct a false belief. Regarding goals, Chisholm and Feehan (1977:143-59) state that the goals of the deceiver S in H are important to observe the motivational types of deception that would otherwise go unnoticed.

When the four sorts of deception by commission are restated as goals, it is seen that S can have (a) an acquire goal: H should acquire a false belief; (b) a prevent goal: H should not acquire a true belief; (c) a continue goal: H should continue to hold a false belief; or (d) a cease goal: H should not continue to hold a true belief.

3.3 Strategies of Deception

Based on Galasinski (2000:37), deception strategies take different forms depending on the communicative goals and motivation. Six strategies are selected to explain how deception could be realized.

3.3.1 Falsification

Galasinski (2000:39-40) notes that falsification is a deceptive strategy where a speaker falsely attributes a statement to another speaker during debate. The falsified utterance does not justify the deceiver's representation. The misleading speaker constructs their speech using the same knowledge frame as the original speaker to create the impression that he discusses the same matter and reasonably interprets the original. Utterances of this type are applied to two strategies: (a) manipulation of the participants shown in the processes represented in the target utterance and (b) manipulation of the processes themselves.

3.3.2 Distortions

Galasiński (2000:43) states that in opposition to falsifications, distortions involves all those utterances in which the speaker does not so much lies but he exaggerates, overstates, or minimalizes. Deceivers disassociate themselves from the falsehood and disclaim any involvement in it. Target utterances are represented as stronger/more general or weaker/more particular than those made.

3.3.3 Depersonalization/Disassociation

A deceiver distances themselves from a lie by disassociating themselves from it. Instead of using personal information, they prefer to provide impersonal information by referring to a third party's experience. Deceivers also increasingly use impersonal pronouns such as "one" and "we" in order to avoid taking responsibility for their statements and to reduce their personal liability by sharing the information. As a result, deceptive statements contain fewer first-person singular pronouns than truthful statements (Isabel, 2013:32).

3.3.4 Equivocation

Galasiński (2000:25-29) defines equivocation as "nonstraightforward, ambiguous, or obscure, and proposes to see indirect speech acts or evasion as equivocation." Equivocation appears to be viewed in at least two aspects: on the one hand, semantic—an equivocal message is confused or ambiguous. On the other hand, equivocation is also described conversationally as an

indirect or irrelevant reaction. The two essential elements of equivocation are ambiguous language and an effort to deceive others (Kuzio,2018:216).

3.3.5 Concealment

Clark and Schaefer (1987:209-10) point out that concealers craft their words only to be understood with the knowledge of a specific key. Their goals are accomplished by disclosing portions of their meaning or intention to the addressees or concealing all of them. So, Clark and Schaefer add that concealment is an efficacious feature in the design of any utterance. Buller et al. (1994:369) define concealment as following "strategy of deception involves withholding information. ". Zuckerman et al. (1981:4) state that the deceiver may need to conceal a secondary effect he or she has on withheld information. For instance, if the lie conceals a fact (e.g., age) or an emotion (e.g., hatred), the deceiver must conceal the humiliation and the information that has caused it. For Strachman and Steck (2008: 385), concealment is the act by one party that stops another from discovering something by concealing information or omitting too close information that one must provide.

3.3.6 Ostensible Promise

Isaacs and Clark (1990:508) define ostensible promise as a kind of nonserious language use- a form of mutually realized deception - that also involves play acting, irony, sarcasm, facetiousness, and teasing. Long-term promises are made by speakers who need more confidence in their ability to keep them in order to deceive others who are sacking for supporting the goal they intend to advance.

4. Methodology

The current research involves the identification of the clauses that have strategies of deception alone with the three metafunctional meaning.

4.1 Data Description

The data chosen to be analyzed in the study represent two British news reports collected from famous British newspapers and news sites which are "BBC news and GB news.". The selected news is going to represent Russia-Ukraine War. Their length spans from one to one and half a page which offers the chance of applying the different deception strategies beside the analysis of three metafunctions.

4.2 Model of Analysis

The Hallidayan and Matthiessen perspective (2014) is adopted to investigate the experiential metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, and textual metafunction to identify

deception realized in the selected data. As for deception, the strategies of deception that are suggested by Galasiński (2000) are adopted to identify deception.

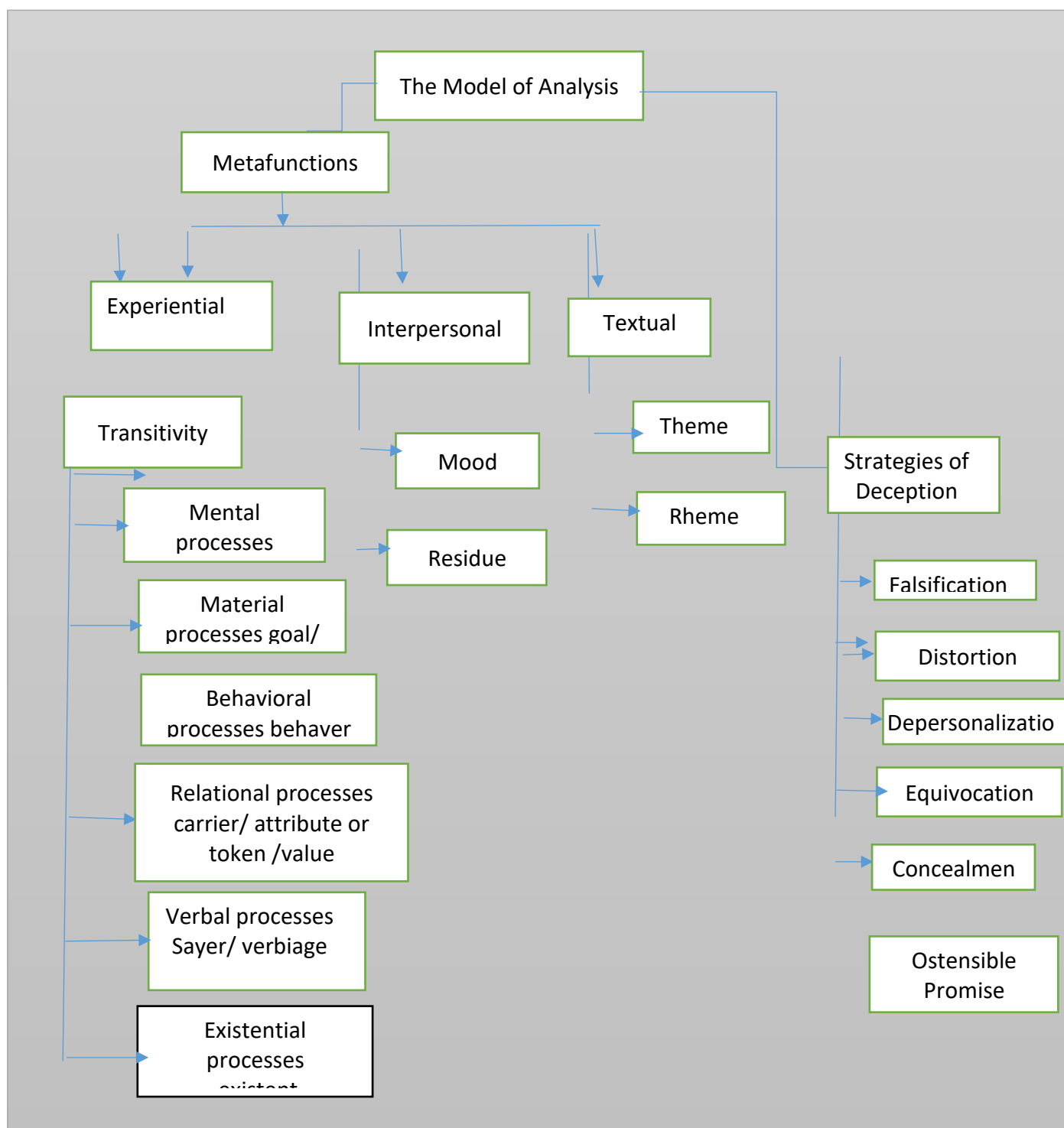


Figure (1) The Model of Analysis

5. Analysis

5.1 Deception analysis

Text (')

Putin orders 10% boost in Russian troop numbers.

Russia's president has signed a decree which could see 137,000 service personnel added to the country's armed forces in the coming months.

Currently Russia has a limit of just over a million military personnel and almost 900,000 civilian staff. Vladimir Putin's decree comes amid a recruitment drive around the country, with large cash incentives on offer. Western officials say 70-80,000 troops have been killed or wounded since Russia invaded Ukraine six months ago.

There have been reports that recruiters have even been visiting prisons, promising inmates freedom and money. The UK Ministry of Defence said in a statement two weeks ago that volunteer battalions being set up in several Russian regions were likely to form part of a new army corps. But it said "very limited levels of popular enthusiasm for volunteering for combat in Ukraine" meant it would be difficult to find the required number of troops.

Russia had initially promised a short, decisive campaign when it invaded Ukraine in February, but fierce Ukrainian resistance has stalled its progress and in recent weeks front lines have hardly moved.

Volunteers or conscripts?

The decree, published by the Russian President's office (in Russian), stipulates that "the numerical size of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation should be set at 2,039,758, including 1,150,628 military personnel". Currently the limit is set at 1,013,628 military personnel, though the actual number before the start of the invasion was thought to be closer to 900,000.

The decree asks the government to provide funds from the federal budget for this purpose. It will come into force on 1 January 2023. However, it is not clear whether numbers will be increased by recruiting more volunteers or broadening conscription.

Currently Russian men aged 18 to 27 are subject to the call-up, although many are able to avoid or reduce the term of their service - usually one year - through medical exemptions or by enrolling for higher education.

Russia initially denied sending conscript soldiers to Ukraine, but several officers were disciplined after cases came to light of conscripts being forced to sign contracts and in some instances being taken prisoner.

Under Russian law, conscripts are required to undergo four months' training before being sent to the war.

<https://www.gbnews.uk/news/russian-war-dead-reaches-20000-compared-to-3000-ukrainians-says-zelenskyy/> 25 August 2022

The above text news is considered deceptive because it consists of intentional misrepresentation, such as (*currently Russia has a limit of just over a million military personnel and almost 900,000 civilian staff., in recent weeks front lines have hardly moved*). Distortion strategy is used in these clauses since there are both categories of exaggerations and minimizations. Concealment is used in (*Western officials say 70-80,000 troops have been killed or wounded since Russia invaded Ukraine six months ago*) because the number of killed and wounded soldiers is unspecified and unified in one number. So, some information is concealed. The use of expressions such as (*.... several Russian region..., the Russian federation should be*

set at 2,039,758, ... military personnel Currently the limit is set at 1,013,628 military personnel, It is not clear whether numbers will be increased, Russia initially denied sending....., but several officers some instances being taken prisoner.) , indicates that concealment strategy is used to withhold information intentionally to mislead addressee. The clause (the invasion was thought to be closer to 900,000) is used to equivocate for the sake of falsifying the others. Thus, equivocation strategy arises. There is also an ostensible promise strategy which arises in the clauses (.....promising inmates freedom and money) and (Russia had initially promised a short.....) using the verb 'promise' in order to make positive impression and strengthen the Russian situation.

Text (2)

At least 2,500 Ukrainian troops have died since Russia invaded, Zelensky says. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said about 2,500 to 3,000 Ukrainian troops have been killed in seven weeks of war with Russia and about 10,000 have been injured. There was no count of civilian casualties, he said. He said 19,000 to 20,000 Russian soldiers had been killed in the war, now in its eighth week. Moscow said last month that 1,351 Russian soldiers had been killed and 3,825 wounded. Reuters could not independently verify either side's numbers. Fighting was intense in Mariupol as Ukraine said it was trying to break Russia's siege of the southeastern port city. Home to 400,000 people before Russia's invasion, Mariupol has been reduced to rubble. Thousands of civilians have died and tens of thousands remain trapped. "The situation in Mariupol is difficult and hard. Fighting is happening right now. The Russian army is constantly calling on additional units to storm the city," defence ministry spokesperson Oleksandr Motuzyanyk told a briefing. He said the Russians have not completely captured it. Russia said it struck what it described as a factory on the outskirts of the capital Kyiv that made and repaired anti-ship missiles, after the sinking on Thursday of the Moskva, the flagship of Moscow's Black Sea fleet. Ukraine said one of its missiles had caused the Moskva to sink, a powerful symbol of its resistance to a better-armed foe. Moscow said the ship sank while being towed in stormy seas after a fire caused by an explosion of ammunition and that more than 500 sailors were evacuated. The United States believes the Moskva was hit by two Ukrainian missiles and that there were Russian casualties, although numbers were unclear, a senior US official said. Zelenskiy said the military situation in the south and east was "still very difficult," while praising the work of his armed forces. "The successes of our military on the battlefield are really significant, historically significant. But they are still not enough to clean our land of the occupiers. We will beat them some more," he said in a late-night video address, calling again for allies to send heavier weapons and for an international embargo on Russian oil. Zelenskiy has appealed to US President Joe Biden for the United States to designate Russia a "state sponsor of terrorism," joining North Korea, Cuba, Iran and Syria, the Washington Post reported, citing people familiar with their conversation. A White House spokesperson responded by saying, "We will continue to consider all options to increase the pressure on Putin ". Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal and top finance officials will attend International Monetary Fund and World Bank meetings in Washington next week, sources told Reuters.

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It will be the first chance for key Ukrainian officials to meet in person with financial officials from advanced economies since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-62677262> 16 April 2022

The above text is rendered as deceptive as a result of the presence of the criteria which are characteristics of deception news such as the word 'about'. It refers to concealing some information. The use of (...19,000 to 20,000 Russian soldiers had been killed in the war) reveals the concealment of information such as the number of soldiers. "Ukraine said it was trying to break Russia's siege" signifies that information is concealed because of using the verb 'try' that means Ukraine cannot face Russian. The clauses: "The Russian army is constantly calling, Russians have not completely captured, Russians have not completely captured" these clauses suggest that Zelenskiy attempts to conceal the progress of Russian in the war. Another evidence mentioned in the text is the following clause "There was no count of civilian casualties". Volodymyr Zelenskiy tries to hide the number of people who are victims. Depersonalization is used to intent deception in "The situation in Mariupol is difficult and hard". The expression "the situation" is unclear since it does not refer to whom it is difficult, to Ukrainian or Russian. "Russia said it struck what it described as a factory on the outskirts, Fighting was intense in Mariupol". The clause "We will beat them some more," demonstrates two strategies of deception: ostensible promise by using the modal 'will' and distortion by using 'more'.

5.2 Metafunctional Analysis

In this section, clauses that have deceptive expressions are analyzed in Table (2) and categorize each type of metafunction as experiential, interpersonal, and textual. These clauses are estimated on the basis of frequency with which they emerge in the two chosen texts.

Table (2) Rate of Experiential Analysis

		Fr.	%
Types of processes	mental	3	9
	material	12	35
	behavioral	1	3
	verbal	6	18
	relational	10	29
	existential	2	6
	total	34	100
Elements	processe	11	24
	participant	14	31
	circumstance	20	45
Total		45	100

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process amounts (9%), existential (6%), and behavioral (3%). As detected in Table (2) above which is about the experiential metafunction, the circumstance element is highly used in British news which employs deception. It rates (45%) which denotes that deception news frequently uses circumstance to deceive people. It is also noticed that the participant comes in the second place out of the whole number of the elements in experiential metafunction. It scores (31%). Least frequent in elements of experiential metafunction is process those rates (24%).

Table (3) Rate of Interpersonal Metafunctions

Interpersonal Metafunctions		
	Fr.	%
Mood	٢٣	٤٩
Residue	٢٤	٥١
Total	٤٧	١٠٠

Table (3) illustrates the percentages of the interpersonal metafunction to express deception. The deception is either mood or residue. Residue occupies the higher percentage than mood which scores (51%). Mood amounts (49%). Accordingly, a deceiver severs the part of residue to convey his/her misleading or deception.

Table (4) Rate of Textual Metafunctions

Textual Metafunctions		
	Fr.	%
Theme	١٥	31
Rheme	33	69
	٤٨	١٠٠

As it is observed in Table (4), the textual metafunction analysis is divided into two constituents: theme, which places first, and rheme which comes at the rest of the clause. The majority of deception percentage scores in rheme. It amounts (69%). the rest constituents of deception are all part of theme. It scores (31%).

Table (5) The Rate of the Strategies of Deception

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N0.	Strategies of Deception		
		Fr.	%
1-	Falsification	٢	6
2-	Distortion	4	12
3-	Depersonalization	3	9
4-	Equivocation	1	3
5-	Concealment	19	٥٨
6-	Ostensible promise	4	12
	total	٣٣	100

Table (5) reveals that concealment strategy is the most one used in the British news. It amounts (58%). The results indicate that some information is withheld to build the deception accurately. Ostensible promise and distortion strategies come in the second rank in frequency. They rate (12%). The third rank is occupied by depersonalization which amounts (9%). Distortion comes in the fourth level. It scores (6%). equivocation comes at the last grade. It scores (3%).

6- Conclusion

Based on the qualitative and quantitative analyses of the data in the current study, the following conclusions are drawn in accordance with its aims and hypotheses. The systemic functional linguistic analysis reveals that the three strands of metafunction: experiential, interpersonal, and textual are recognized in the selected data. The result of analysis of deception shows that British news reports use different strategies of deception to persuade their audience. The findings of the statistical analysis of metafunction demonstrate that the material process occupies (35%) in the types of process and circumstance element is the extremely used in British news which employs deception in experiential. It scores (45%). Residue occupies a higher percentage than mood in interpersonal analysis which scores (51%). In textual analysis, the major part of deception percentage scores in rheme. It amounts (69%). The result of statistical deception strategies reveals that the concealment strategy is the highly one used in the British news (58%). The result shows that the deceiver tries to conceal some information to foster the

deception accurately. The study concludes that the three metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal, and textual) paly an essential role in choosing specific patterns of language to express deception.

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