
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Grammatical Positioning in Mediated Campus Opinion Discourse: A CDA-Informed Analysis of Student Publications at a Philippine State University

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| ABSTRACT

This study examines how selected grammatical resources contribute to participant positioning, agency, and temporal framing in opinion articles published by four student publications at Mindanao State University–Marawi, Philippines. The study adopts a qualitative, descriptive-interpretive textual analysis informed by Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA), with the textual dimension serving as the principal analytical framework. The analysis focuses on personal pronouns, active and passive voice, and tense and aspect. The corpus consists of opinion articles from *Ember*, *Daluyong*, *Scientia*, and *Ranon*, the university's official student publications. The findings show recurring first-person plural forms, especially *we*, *our*, and *us*, which can construct collective participant identities while positioning the writer in relation to other social actors. Third-person forms such as *they* and *their* create textual distinctions between the writer's represented collective and other groups, although their exact referents remain context-dependent. Active constructions make grammatical agents comparatively visible, whereas the agentless passive constructions in the sample foreground affected participants or events while reducing the grammatical prominence of agents. Present-tense constructions repeatedly represent conditions, evaluations, and institutional circumstances as current or relevant to the discourse situation. The discussion situates these patterns within research on mediated discourse, journalistic stance, identity construction, and representation. Rather than treating grammatical choices as transparent evidence of authorial intention or ideological manipulation, the study argues that they are resources through which campus opinion discourse makes social actors, relationships, responsibility, and temporality linguistically available. The article contributes a text-grounded account of student journalism as a form of mediated institutional discourse.

| KEYWORDS

campus journalism; critical discourse analysis; mediated discourse; pronouns; agency; journalistic stance; tense and aspect

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1. Introduction

Discourse is not simply a linguistic container for ideas that exist independently of language. Choices in wording, grammar, participant reference, evaluation, and sequencing shape how social events and identities become intelligible in particular communicative contexts. This observation is especially consequential for mediated discourse because media do not merely transmit already-formed meanings. The material, institutional, and technological conditions through which discourse is produced and circulated can shape what can be said, how participants can be represented, and how audiences are positioned.

Within this broader field, journalism is a particularly productive domain because journalistic discourse is simultaneously linguistic, institutional, and mediated. Journalists select and organize representations of events, social actors, causes, and consequences for an anticipated audience. Even when a text adopts an apparently straightforward propositional form, grammatical decisions can affect which participants are foregrounded, which are backgrounded, who is represented as acting,

and how events are temporally positioned. Research has shown the value of examining linguistic resources as part of constructing mediated meanings. For example, Bednarek (2016) shows how discourse analysis can illuminate the construction of news values, while White (2012) examines attribution and evaluative positioning in journalistic discourse. Breeze (2015), meanwhile, demonstrates how second-person pronouns in editorials can establish particular relationships with readers. Such work suggests that apparently small linguistic forms can participate in broader processes of mediated positioning.

Campus journalism provides a distinctive setting for examining these processes. Student publications occupy an institutional space between education and journalism: they are produced by students, situated within universities, and addressed to readers who may include fellow students, faculty members, administrators, alumni, and members of the wider public. In the Philippine context, campus publications have historically served not only as channels for information but also as spaces where students interpret institutional and social issues. Cruz (2013) characterizes campus journalism as involving both informing and interpreting, while research on Mindanao State University–Marawi has documented the institutional role and language practices of its student publications (Alonto, 2011; Plaza, 2013; Sunio & Alico, 2016). Opinion articles are particularly relevant because they make evaluation and positioning central to the genre rather than treating them as incidental features of reporting.

The present study examines opinion articles from four official student publications at Mindanao State University–Marawi (MSU–Marawi): *Ember*, *Daluyong*, *Scientia*, and *Ranon*. It focuses on three grammatical domains: personal pronouns, active and passive voice, and tense and aspect. These features were selected because they provide observable linguistic entry points into questions of participant positioning, agency, and temporal framing. The study does not assume that a grammatical form has a fixed ideological meaning. Rather, following discourse-analytic approaches that treat linguistic choices as context-sensitive resources, it asks how particular forms function within their immediate textual environments and what social meanings can reasonably be inferred.

The study is deliberately narrower than a full three-dimensional application of Fairclough's model. Fairclough (1992, 1993) conceptualizes discourse through interrelated dimensions of text, discursive practice, and social practice. The present corpus, however, consists primarily of archived texts and does not contain systematic interviews with writers or editors, detailed records of editorial decision-making, or audience-response data. Consequently, the study uses Fairclough's textual dimension as its principal analytical lens and describes itself as a CDA-informed textual analysis. This formulation is methodologically important: it retains CDA's concern with the relationship between linguistic form and social meaning without claiming evidence for authorial intentions, editorial processes, or audience effects that the corpus cannot establish.

The study addresses four research questions: (1) What participant-reference patterns, particularly personal pronouns, occur in the selected opinion articles? (2) How are active and passive voice constructions used to represent participants and agency? (3) What tense and aspect patterns occur in the selected opinion articles, and what textual functions do these patterns perform? and (4) What implications for the construction of social relationships, agency, and relevance can reasonably be drawn from these syntactic choices?

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis and the Study of Mediated Texts

Critical discourse analysis developed from a concern with the relationship between language, social relations, and power. Rather than treating discourse as an autonomous linguistic object, CDA examines how textual choices reproduce, negotiate, or contest social meanings. Fairclough's (1992, 1993) model is particularly influential because it links textual analysis with discursive practice and social practice. At the textual level, lexical, grammatical, and cohesive choices can be examined systematically; at the level of discursive practice, attention shifts to production, distribution, and interpretation; and at the level of social practice, discourse is related to broader institutional and social relations. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) emphasize that these dimensions are analytically interconnected rather than independent stages.

The present study adopts this orientation selectively. The decision to focus on the textual dimension is not a rejection of the broader CDA framework, but a recognition that theoretical claims should align with available evidence. Lin (2014) notes that CDA encompasses diverse approaches and that methodological choices should align with the research question and data. Richardson (2007) similarly demonstrates the value of combining detailed linguistic analysis with contextual interpretation in the study of media discourse. In the current corpus, the most defensible contribution lies in showing how grammatical choices create patterns of participant visibility, agency, and temporal relevance. Claims about the institutional ideology of the publications or the intentions of individual writers are therefore treated as interpretive possibilities rather than demonstrated facts.

This distinction matters because CDA has sometimes been criticized for treating textual features as automatic evidence of ideological manipulation. A passive construction, for example, does not inherently conceal responsibility; it may foreground an affected participant, maintain information flow, or reflect ordinary grammatical preferences. Likewise, a first-person plural pronoun does not inherently create solidarity. Its referent and discourse function depend on context. A text-centered CDA-informed approach is, therefore, most productive when it combines close grammatical description with contextual interpretation and explicitly recognizes alternative explanations.

2.2 Mediated Discourse, Journalism, and Institutional Circulation

Mediated discourse research extends discourse analysis by asking not only what linguistic forms occur, but also how mediation shapes communicative practices. It describes mediated discourse in terms of how media affordances, technology, and mediated contexts shape the creation, transmission, and interpretation of discourse (Elsevier, 2026). This orientation is relevant to campus journalism because student publications constitute institutional arrangements through which individual student writers acquire a public communicative voice. A campus opinion article is not simply a private statement: it is selected for publication, presented through a recognizable publication, and addressed to an anticipated readership. Even when the present study cannot reconstruct every stage of this process, the institutional status of the publication provides an important context for interpreting the linguistic choices in the texts.

Research illustrates several ways in which mediated contexts can become analytically relevant. Johansson (2017) treats online news discussion forums as spaces in which private-sphere stances become public discourse. Breeze (2015) examines how editorial writers use second-person pronouns to construct relationships with readers, showing that reader positioning is not incidental to mediated opinion writing. Liu and Chang (2021) examine identity construction in media editorials and show how linguistic choices relate to the imagined readership of a media text. Baumgartner et al. (2021) further argue that journalistic mediation can facilitate discourse among dispersed members of society and that speakers in mediated communication can represent broader social groups, not only themselves. These studies support the present study's treatment of campus publications as mediated institutional discourse while also underscoring the need not to reduce mediation to the existence of a publication outlet.

The journalistic character of opinion writing also matters. Opinion genres conventionally allow more explicit evaluation and authorial positioning than hard-news genres. White (2012) shows that even ostensibly impersonal news writing can advance value positions through attribution and evaluative positioning. Bednarek (2016) similarly demonstrates that news values are constructed discursively rather than simply extracted from events. These observations are useful for campus opinion writing because the genre makes the writer's interpretive role especially visible. The grammatical resources examined in the present study can consequently be understood as part of a larger process of journalistic stancing: writers select linguistic forms that help establish who is speaking, who is being addressed or represented, what actions are foregrounded, and how propositions are temporally situated.

2.3 Pronouns, Identity, and Participant Positioning

Personal pronouns are grammatical forms with strong discourse-pragmatic consequences because their interpretation depends on the relation between the speech or writing event and its participants. In mediated opinion discourse, first-person plural forms are especially important because we can refer to different collectivities depending on context. The distinction between inclusive and exclusive 'we' is therefore not encoded mechanically in the form itself; it is constructed through the referent and surrounding discourse. Research on identity construction has repeatedly shown that pronouns can contribute to projecting writer and group identities. Tang and John (1999), for example, demonstrate that first-person reference can signal different dimensions of writer identity rather than representing a single homogeneous authorial presence. More recent work likewise treats pronouns as resources for constructing and negotiating collective identities in discourse (Gryshchenko, 2025).

The contrast between 'we' and they 'is' particularly significant in critical discourse studies because it can organize representations of social groups. Van Dijk (1995, 1998) discusses ideological discourse in terms of strategies that emphasize positive ingroup characteristics and negative outgroup characteristics. However, a we/they distinction should not automatically be equated with ideological polarization. Kleinke (2018), for example, demonstrates that first- and third-person plural forms in public online discussion can have complex and indeterminate referents. This caution is directly relevant to the present corpus. When a writer uses 'we', the referent may be students, writers and students, citizens, or a broader national community. Similarly, they may refer to administrators, officials, other students, or a more abstract social group. Interpretation must therefore be anchored in co-text and context.

Second-person 'you' deserves separate attention because it establishes a grammatical route to direct address. Breeze (2015) found that you in newspaper editorials can establish relationships between writers and readers and can contribute to less distant forms of public discourse. In a campus opinion article, second-person address can potentially reduce the distance between writer and reader or confront a represented addressee. Yet the referential openness of you also makes it a flexible resource: the same form can refer to an institution, a generalized public, or a particular social group depending on the surrounding text. The present study therefore interprets 'you' primarily as a marker of direct address rather than assigning a specific addressee without contextual evidence.

2.4 Agency, Voice, and Representation

Agency concerns the representation of participants as actors in events or processes. In grammatical analysis, voice is one important resource for organizing this representation. Active clauses commonly place an actor in subject position, whereas passive clauses can place the affected participant in subject position and optionally omit the actor. This difference has long

mattered in linguistic approaches to media discourse because choices about participant visibility can shape how responsibility is represented. Fairclough (1992) treats grammatical choices as representational resources through which texts construct social events. Richardson (2007) likewise shows how grammatical analysis can investigate representation and ideological meaning in news discourse.

At the same time, the relationship between passive voice and agency requires careful treatment. A passive construction does not automatically indicate an intention to conceal responsibility. It may foreground the affected participant because that participant is more relevant to the preceding discourse, because the actor is unknown, or because the writer wishes to maintain a particular information structure. Contemporary methodological discussion also cautions against treating grammatical agency as a direct equivalent of social responsibility. The present study therefore uses terms such as “backgrounded,” “less grammatically prominent,” and “foregrounded” rather than assuming that a passive construction proves intentional concealment.

2.5 Tense, Aspect, and Temporal Framing

Tense and aspect contribute to the temporal organization of discourse. Tense locates a proposition relative to a deictic point, while aspect concerns how an event or state is represented in relation to its temporal development. In opinion discourse, present-tense forms can make propositions appear immediate, ongoing, generally valid, or relevant to the current communicative situation. The present tense, however, does not have a single discourse meaning. Its interpretation depends on the clause's lexical content, accompanying temporal adverbials, and the larger argumentative sequence.

2.6 Campus Journalism as Mediated Institutional Discourse

Campus journalism is situated within a distinctive communicative ecology. Unlike commercial journalism, student publications are simultaneously journalistic organizations and educational institutions. Student journalists learn professional practices while producing texts that can participate in debates over university governance, curriculum, student welfare, and wider social issues. This dual status creates a context in which authors may write as individual students while also occupying an institutionalized publication role. The resulting discourse can therefore negotiate multiple identities: writer, student, member of a publication, representative of a college community, and participant in a broader public conversation. Studies of MSU–Marawi provide a useful local foundation for this analysis. Alonto (2011), Omelio (2013), and Plaza (2013) document the content, structure, and responsibilities of college student publications at the university. Sunio and Alico (2016) further report a preference for English among most student journalists surveyed at MSU–Marawi. These studies situate English-language campus writing within an established institutional practice rather than treating the corpus as an isolated collection of student essays. The present study extends this local scholarship by examining grammatical resources within opinion writing and by asking how those resources organize participant relations, agency, and temporality.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Corpus

The study employs a qualitative, descriptive-interpretive textual analysis informed by Fairclough's CDA. The design is text-centered because the principal empirical materials are published opinion articles. Fairclough's textual dimension provides the analytical orientation, while concepts from discourse studies and mediated discourse research guide interpretation of participant positioning, agency, and temporal framing. The design is not presented as a complete implementation of the three-dimensional CDA model because the available research record provides insufficient evidence on production, distribution, reception, and broader social practice.

The corpus comprises opinion articles obtained from four official student publications at MSU–Marawi: *Ember* of the College of Education, *Daluyong* of the College of Fisheries, *Scientia* of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, and *Ranon*. These publications are members of the College Editors' Guild of the Philippines.

3.2 Data Collection and Ethical Handling

The researchers conducted preliminary inquiries with the selected publications and obtained copies of released issues with permission from editorial boards and staff. Request letters and emails were sent to editors-in-chief and publication advisers, and unit libraries in participating colleges were also consulted. Because the study analyzes published student-journalism texts rather than private interviews or confidential communications, the primary ethical concern is representing the publications and their authors appropriately.

3.3 Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, the selected texts were examined for personal pronouns and their immediate discourse contexts. We recorded the forms 'we', 'our', 'us', 'you', 'they', and 'their' where they appeared in the original analysis. The researchers then examined the likely referents of these forms by considering the surrounding clauses and the passage's broader topic. Second, we examined clauses for active and passive voice, with particular attention to whether an agent was explicitly expressed. Third, we identified tense and aspect patterns in the sampled verb phrases, paying attention to

temporal adverbials such as now and today. Fourth, the observed patterns were interpreted in relation to participant positioning, agency, and temporal framing.

The analysis distinguishes textual description from discourse interpretation. A frequency count, grammatical classification, or quotation is treated as a textual observation. A claim that a pronoun constructs a collective identity, that a passive construction backgrounds agency, or that present tense contributes to temporal relevance is treated as an interpretation supported by the textual evidence and relevant literature.

This procedure follows a principle of analytical proportionality. Rather than assuming that each linguistic feature has a fixed ideological function, the study asks what the feature does in its particular context. This is especially important for pronouns and passive voice, whose discourse functions depend heavily on referential and contextual information. The approach also recognizes that frequency alone does not establish salience or ideological significance. The numerical data therefore identify recurrent forms, while close qualitative analysis interprets their discourse functions.

3.4 Scope and Trustworthiness

The corpus is purposively selected and limited to one university. It is therefore not intended to represent Philippine campus journalism as a whole. Trustworthiness is supported through transparent identification of the linguistic evidence, careful distinction between observation and interpretation, attention to contextual referents, and cautious formulation of claims. The study also treats the limitations of the archival record as part of its methodological scope rather than filling missing metadata through inference.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Participant Reference and the Construction of Collective Identity

Table 1 shows that first-person plural 'we' occurs in all four publications. 'Our' also occurs in all four publications, while 'us' occurs in *Ember* and *Scientia*. *Daluyong* and *Ranon* contain 'their', and *Ember* contains 'you' and 'they'. The distribution indicates that opinion articles repeatedly use grammatical resources to refer to collectives and to position participants in relation to one another. The particularly recurrent use of 'we' is analytically significant because first-person plural reference can simultaneously perform self-reference and group reference. In mediated opinion writing, this allows the writer to speak from within a collective rather than presenting the argument exclusively as an individual viewpoint.

The passage "We are well aware of this new curriculum" illustrates this function. The grammatical subject 'we' places the writer within the group represented as knowledgeable about the curriculum. The form therefore does more than identify the speaker: it presents knowledge as collectively held. Similarly, "All of us share in this fault" explicitly places the writer and other participants within a common group. The wording can be read as collective positioning because the writer does not isolate personal responsibility but distributes it across a larger participant category. This observation is consistent with research that treats first-person forms as resources for constructing writer identity and group membership (Tang & John, 1999; Gryshchenko, 2025).

At the same time, the precise referent of 'we' cannot be determined from morphology alone. In "We are well aware of this new curriculum," we may plausibly refer to students, writers and students, or another contextually available group. The form could therefore be inclusive or exclusive depending on who is included in the represented group. This is consistent with Kleinke's (2018) observation that 'we' and 'they' can have complex and indeterminate referents in public discourse. The implication for CDA is methodological: the analyst should not assign ideological meaning to a pronoun before establishing its discourse referent.

The contrast between 'we/us' and 'they' is more revealing when the forms occur within related passages. In the *Ember* example, "what is even more odd is how they ask students who didn't pay," the pronoun they creates a textual category distinct from the writer's immediate participant group. This is an instance of differentiation because the represented actors are referred to in the third person rather than incorporated into the writer's we/us configuration. Van Dijk's (1995, 1998) work helps explain why such group distinctions can matter in discourse: pronouns can contribute to representations of ingroups and outgroups.

The possessive 'their' operates similarly but adds a relational dimension because it attributes possession or association to the third-person group. In a mediated opinion article, this form can help represent an external institution, group, or social actor as distinct from the writer's collective. The meaning becomes stronger when the possessive occurs alongside evaluative or argumentative language.

The use of 'you' in "And yet you blame us for being mediocre?" introduces a different relation. Whereas 'they' and 'we' primarily organize participant categories, 'you' directly addresses an addressee. Breeze (2015) found that second-person pronouns in editorials can construct relationships between writers and readers and can contribute to less distant forms of public discourse.

Table 1. Pronoun Choices in Student Publications

Publication	Pronouns reported	Frequency	Illustrative text
Ember	we; our; us; you; they	54; 24; 10; 6; 6	"We fall inferior for our incompetence." / "All of us share in this fault." / "And yet you blame us for being mediocre?"
Daluyong	we; our; they; their	11; 2; 8; 3	"Aren't we enough?" / "We are now a country of a hundred million people..." / "...the DOLE people are dim-wits..."
Scientia	we; our; us	12; 1; 5	"We are well aware of this new curriculum..." / "Today, we see those GEC courses on our CORs..."
Ranon	we; our; their	3; 1; 7	"...our own government..." / "Their threat of sanctions already suffers..."

4.2 Active and Passive Voice: Making Agency Visible

Table 2 shows active constructions in all four publications and passive examples in Scientia and Ranon. The active examples tend to make grammatical agents explicit. In "CHED reduced the general education curriculum from 63 units to 36 units," CHED occupies the subject position and is directly connected to the action of reducing. The construction therefore makes the institutional actor grammatically prominent. Similarly, in "the College continues to accept many enrollees," the College appears as the actor of the process of accepting. The grammatical organization allows readers to identify who or what is represented as acting.

Agency is particularly salient in opinion writing because evaluative claims often depend on causal relations. When an institution is represented as the actor of a change, responsibility becomes easier to trace grammatically. This does not mean that grammatical subjecthood equals moral or legal responsibility; rather, it means that the text makes a participant more visible as the source of an action. Fairclough's (1992) account of grammatical representation is useful here because it directs attention to the choices through which events are linguistically constructed rather than treating sentences as neutral mirrors of reality.

The passive constructions produce a different distribution of grammatical prominence. In "lots class hours have been suspended because some instructors..." the affected entity—class hours—is placed in subject position while the actor responsible for the suspension is not expressed. The clause therefore foregrounds the consequence or affected state rather than the participant who carried it out. In "the casualness in how it was shoved aside by the public," the affected entity is again foregrounded, although the public is included in a by-phrase. The construction thus does not completely erase agency; rather, it gives the affected topic greater grammatical prominence than the actor.

This distinction matters because CDA has often interpreted passive voice as a resource for backgrounding responsibility. Such interpretations can be warranted when the agent is omitted, and the omission is relevant to the discourse. However, the grammatical form itself does not establish the writer's intention. Passive constructions may be motivated by information structure, topicality, discourse continuity, or the affected participant's relative relevance. Consequently, the present findings use the more limited formulation that passive voice can reduce the grammatical prominence of agency. This interpretation aligns with research that treats grammatical agency as one component of representation rather than a transparent window into ideological intention.

The contrast between the active and passive examples also demonstrates that agency is relational. The question is not simply whether an agent exists in the real-world event but whether the text makes that participant grammatically salient. A mediated text necessarily selects one representation from among many possible ways of describing an event. The choice between "CHED reduced the curriculum," and a formulation foregrounding the curriculum or its consequences would organize attention differently. In this sense, voice mediates by structuring the reader's access to the event through grammatical prominence.

Table 2. Active and Passive Constructions in Student Publications

Publication	Active voice	Passive voice
Ember	"...the College continues to accept many enrollees..."	—
Daluyong	"Most Filipino workers seek for greener pasture." / "...the DOLE people are dim-wits..."	—
Scientia	"CHED reduced the general education curriculum from 63 units to 36 units..."	"...lots class hours have been suspended because some instructors..."
Ranon	"Albayalde's threats to like-minded educators simply further the damage..."	"...the casualness in how it was shoved aside by the public..."

4.3 Tense and Aspect as Temporal Framing

Table 3 contains present-tense examples from all four publications. The recurrence of present-tense forms is analytically important because the present tense can connect propositions to the discourse situation. In Ember, "We are trampled for our

mediocrity” and “We are at an ironic position” represent the described condition as existing rather than completed. In Daluyong, “We are now a country of a hundred million people” and “The Philippines ... is now turning to foreign workers” represent demographic and employment circumstances as current developments. In Scientia, “Today, we see those GEC courses on our CORs” explicitly anchors the observation to the time of writing. In Ranon, present-tense forms such as “These arguments do have merit” frame the evaluation as valid at the point of discourse.

The temporal function of these constructions is related to the communicative purpose of opinion writing. An opinion article typically interprets a problem for readers who encounter the text after or during the events being discussed. Present-tense forms can therefore help transform an event or condition into an issue of continuing relevance. This does not mean that present tense necessarily creates urgency. Rather, it allows the writer to construe the proposition as contemporaneously applicable. The temporal relation is particularly explicit when present tense occurs with now or today, because these adverbials connect the proposition to a shared discourse time.

The finding can also be understood in relation to the mediated character of the texts. Publication creates a temporal gap between writing and reading: the writer composes at one moment, while readers may encounter the article later. Present-tense framing can help bridge this gap by representing the issue as still valid or ongoing at the moment of reading. This is especially relevant in campus journalism, where opinion pieces may respond to institutional developments that remain under discussion. The grammar thus contributes to the text’s capacity to remain relevant beyond the immediate moment of production.

Aspect adds another layer to this temporal organization. Forms such as “has brought” in Scientia represent a development as having occurred with consequences that remain relevant, while progressive forms such as “is now turning” construe a process as ongoing. The combination of tense and aspect therefore allows writers to represent social conditions not only as past or present but as completed developments with current consequences or unfolding processes. Such distinctions matter for opinion discourse because arguments often depend on presenting a condition as established, continuing, or changing.

The analysis consequently supports a cautious interpretation of temporal relevance. The selected present-tense forms help construe conditions and evaluations as current, ongoing, or presently applicable. They should not be interpreted as direct evidence that writers intended to create urgency or that readers experienced a heightened sense of urgency. Establishing such effects would require reception data.

Table 3. Tense and Aspect in Student Publications

Publication	Illustrative tense/aspect patterns
Ember	“We are trampled for our mediocrity.” / “Now, we are desolate of such title.” / “We are at an ironic position...”
Daluyong	“We are now a country of a hundred million people...” / “The Philippines ... is now turning to foreign workers...”
Scientia	“Today, we see those GEC courses...” / “...this development has brought us more benefits...”
Ranon	“...we can safely dismiss these claims as unwarranted...” / “These arguments do have merit...”

4.4 Grammatical Positioning and Mediated Readership

Taken together, the three analytical domains indicate that the articles do more than encode propositions. They organize relations among participants and between propositions and the communicative situation. Pronouns establish who is included in or distinguished from a collective; voice determines which participants receive grammatical prominence; and tense and aspect position propositions in time. These resources can be understood as components of stance because they allow writers to locate themselves, their audiences, and represented social actors within an argumentative configuration.

This observation is consistent with Perrin’s (2012) concept of stancing, in which writers encode positions within institutional and social frames through linguistic and semiotic resources. In the present corpus, the writer’s position is not limited to explicit evaluative adjectives. It can also be realized through participant reference and grammatical organization. The choice of we can make a position appear collectively held; the choice of an active clause can place an institution in an agentive role; and the present tense can construe a proposition as currently valid. These forms therefore contribute to constructing a journalistic voice without necessarily being conscious rhetorical strategies.

The mediated context makes the relationship between grammatical positioning and readership especially important. Because campus opinion articles are published rather than privately exchanged, the writer addresses a dispersed, only partially known audience. Pronouns offer a linguistic mechanism for managing this imagined relationship. The use of we can invite readers into a collective identity, while you can create a direct address, and they can position an external group. DCM research on editorials and mediated public discourse similarly demonstrates that linguistic choices can construct communities of readership and relationships among dispersed participants (Breeze, 2015; Smith & Adendorff, 2014; Baumgartner et al., 2021).

The present findings should nevertheless be distinguished from audience-effect claims. The texts make certain reader positions available, but they do not demonstrate that actual readers adopted those positions. This distinction matters in

mediated discourse research because readers' social knowledge and circumstances shape interpretation. The study therefore addresses the construction of an implied or anticipated participant relation, not persuasion, agreement, or behavioral change.

4.5 Synthesis: From Grammatical Form to Social Meaning

The combined findings indicate three related processes. First, participant reference organizes social membership. The repeated use of first-person plural forms allows writers to construct a collective speaking position rather than a purely individual one. Third-person forms can establish distance from other groups, while second-person forms can create direct address. Second, voice organizes agency and affectedness. Active clauses can make actors visible, whereas passive clauses can foreground affected entities or actions and background the actor. Third, tense and aspect organize temporal relevance by representing situations as current, continuing, or consequential in the present discourse situation.

These processes are mutually reinforcing. A pronoun establishes a participant relation, but the predicate attached to that pronoun can further characterize the group. Similarly, an institution may be named as an actor in an active clause or appear as an omitted agent in a passive clause. Temporal forms can then present the resulting representation as a current state of affairs. The discourse effect therefore emerges not from isolated grammatical features but from their interaction within clauses and across stretches of text. This supports Fairclough's (1992, 1993) view that textual analysis should examine how linguistic choices contribute to wider processes of representation and meaning-making.

The findings also illustrate why a text-centered CDA should resist one-to-one mappings between grammatical forms and ideological meanings. In the same way, we can construct different groups in different contexts; the same passive form can foreground an affected participant for reasons unrelated to concealment; and the same present tense can describe a current state, a generalization, or an evaluation. The analytical value of CDA lies not in assigning predetermined meanings to forms but in making the relationship between form, context, representation, and social meaning explicit.

For mediated campus journalism, this perspective highlights grammar as part of public participation. Student journalists enter public discourse not only through the topics they choose. They also participate through the grammatical construction of who "we" are, who "they" are, who is represented as acting, and which situations are presented as ongoing. Such choices help transform student experience into mediated public discourse. This is a modest but important contribution to the study of campus media. The institutional role of student publications can be examined not only through organizational structures or topics but also through the linguistic organization of published texts.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study examined selected grammatical constructions in opinion articles from four student publications at Mindanao State University–Marawi through a qualitative, CDA-informed textual analysis. By focusing on personal pronouns, active and passive voice, and tense and aspect, the analysis identified recurring resources through which campus opinion writers organize participant relations, agency, and temporal framing. The findings show that grammatical choices matter for constructing mediated social meaning, even when their functions cannot be reduced to deliberate rhetorical strategies.

The pronoun analysis shows that first-person plural forms are especially important in constructing collective participant positions. 'We', 'our', and 'us' can place writers within a shared group, while 'they' and 'their' can distinguish other participants from that group. 'You' can create a more direct relation with an addressee. The interpretation of these forms is context-dependent, and inclusive or exclusive meanings should therefore be established through referential analysis rather than inferred from grammatical form alone. This finding extends the local study of campus journalism by showing how student writers can linguistically move between individual and collective identities within mediated opinion discourse.

The voice analysis shows that active constructions can make agents relatively explicit, whereas the passive constructions represented in the sample can foreground affected participants or events while reducing the grammatical prominence of agents. These differences matter for representing responsibility and agency, but passive voice should not automatically be interpreted as deliberate concealment. The findings support a more nuanced understanding in which grammatical voice is one resource among several through which mediated texts organize attention to social actors.

The tense and aspect analysis shows that present-tense forms recur in the selected passages and frequently appear in descriptions of current conditions, evaluations, and developments. Temporal adverbials such as now and today strengthen the connection between the proposition and the discourse situation. The resulting effect is best described as temporal relevance or contemporaneity rather than automatically as urgency.

More broadly, the study offers a possible way to connect campus journalism research with mediated discourse research. Student publications are not merely sources from which discourse analysts can extract texts. They are institutional sites where student voices are selected, organized, and circulated. A fuller account of this mediation would require research on editorial processes, publication technologies, multimodal presentation, and audience engagement. The present study provides a textual baseline from which such research can proceed.

6. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several limitations limit the study's contribution. First, the corpus is restricted to four student publications at one university. The findings, therefore, cannot be generalized to Philippine campus journalism as a whole. Second, the analysis is primarily textual. Although the study situates the articles within the institutional context of student publications, it does not provide systematic evidence about how articles were drafted, edited, selected, distributed, or received. Future studies can extend the design in several directions. Interviews with student writers, editors, and publication advisers could examine how editorial decisions influence wording and positioning. Draft-to-publication comparisons could identify changes in pronoun reference, voice, modality, and evaluation introduced during editing. Analysis of print and digital versions of the same article could investigate whether platform affordances influence headlines, paragraphing, hyperlinks, multimodality, or direct address. Audience-response research could examine whether readers recognize, negotiate, or resist the participant relations constructed by the texts. Comparative work across universities could determine whether the patterns identified here recur in other Philippine campus-media contexts.

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