This paper shows that headlines are discourse units that are analyzable as independent texts. They are functional parts of news stories that are pragmatically encoded to underscore some special kinds of social meaning other than mere encapsulation of the body of news stories. As pragmatically relevant discourse type, headlines and their overlines are interpreted in terms of their relationship to information in the social context. Previous studies on the language of the mass media identified some stylistic features of news reporting that are ideologically influenced by some peculiar perceptions or bias. (Adesanoye, 1974; Freeborn et al, 1986; Bell 1991). The present study applies the Speech act theory to show that headlines do indeed perform acts in the way they attempt to mediate the Nigerian socio-political experiences. News headlines are viewed as performing illocutionary functions as socially oriented discourse and are a critical strategy employed by journalists to denounce social malaise.