

GRAPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF EDITORIAL LEAD PARAGRAPHS OF SELECTED ENGLISH MEDIUM NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

Communication can be described as a transmission of information, consisting of discriminative stimuli, from a source to the recipient(s). However, studies have revealed that in some cases, the information received is not the same as that which was sent due to all kinds of articulation, idiosyncratic association of words and poor punctuation skills which reduce the efficiency of the transmission. Premised on the foregoing, this study examines the graphological features of Editorial Lead Paragraphs of Selected English Medium Nigerian Newspapers. In order to achieve this objective, the research made use of the English medium newspapers published and are in circulation, which comprise the daily and weekend newspapers listed below. For the analysis of data, Halliday's text linguistic approach was adopted as the theoretical framework. At the end of the exercise, findings reveal that the editors skillfully used graphological features in order to drive home their messages.

Introduction

The International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language – Deluxe Encyclopedic Edition simply defines language as “the expression and communication of emotions or ideas between human beings by means of speech and hearing, the sounds spoken or heard being systematized

and confirmed by usage among a given people. Over a period of time” (716). In the words of Crystal, “a fundamental notion in the study of behaviour which acts as a frame of reference for linguistic and phonetic studies is communication” (89). From the foregoing, it is obvious that communication occurs when two elements of a system are present.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to state that there are two channels of communication namely: *speech* and *writing*. When we speak, we make use of pauses of tone, gestures and facial expression but when we write, we make use of signs and symbols. In this study, *graphology* is used as a term to refer to the writing system of a language and not the analysis of handwriting to determine the psychological characteristics of the writer. Crystal further states that “in theory, communication is said to have taken place if the information received is the same as that sent” (89). In addition, he states that factors such as unintelligibility of articulation, idiosyncratic association of words and poor punctuation skill(s) may reduce the efficiency of transmission.

Premised on the above observations, this study sets out to analyse the graphological elements of editorial lead paragraphs of randomly selected English Medium Nigerian newspapers. For the analysis, Halliday’s text-linguistic approach was adopted because it is via the analysis of texts that we are able to increase our understanding of the linguistic system and of how it enables speakers and writers to produce and process coherent meaning. This in essence means that this research will help readers to understand the principle by which graphological elements such as hyphenations, shapes, italicization, print sizes, punctuations and a few others are adopted by editorial boards through the newspaper editorials.

Data Presentation

From the data collected, the most representative material used in the analysis are presented as follows:

PARAGRAPH A

www.sunnewsonline.com **DAILY SUN** Wednesday, September 18, 2013



EDITORIAL

The police biometric vehicle registration

The authorities of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) recently announced a change in the process of vehicle registration from the present analogue Central Motor Registry (CMR) system to a digital Biometric Central Motor Registration (BCMR) system, from September 16.

PARAGRAPH B

The Guardian
Devotion Nurtured by Truth
FOUNDER: ALEX U. IBRU (1945 – 2011)
Conscience is an open wound; only truth can heal it. Utman den Fodio 1754-1816

Editorial

14 | THE GUARDIAN, Wednesday, May 15, 2013

Where are the teachers?

NIGERIA needs to recruit 200,000 qualified teachers if the country is to meet the Universal Basic Education For All goal by 2015!

Although it came at a most auspicious time, when the abysmally poor results of the Universal Tertiary Matriculation Examinations (UTME) were released, sign-posting the dire straits in which the nation's education is, this verdict by the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) certainly understates Nigeria's problem in education and how to fix it.

PARAGRAPH C

14 | SUNDAY INDEPENDENT September 1, 2013

Editorial

Odimegwu and the undesirable query

CHAIRMAN of the National Population Commission (NPC), Festus Odimegwu, has answered the query issued to him by the Federal Government over his comments on past censuses in the country since 1816, which he claimed were fundamentally flawed.

PARAGRAPH D



DAILY TRUST

Monday, June 2, 2014 / Sha'aban 4, 1435 A.H **THE NEWSPAPER YOU CAN TRUST** www.dailytrust.com.ng Vol. 34 No. 86 N150

EDITORIAL

No. 20 P.O.W. Mafemi Crescent, Off Solomon Lar Way,
Utako District, Abuja
09-6726241, 6715364

Let the Land Use Act be

A report of the Committee on Land Tenure Matters and National Boundaries of the ongoing National Conference recommended that the Land Use Act be expunged from the Constitution of the Federal Republic and replaced with new provisions that would 'guarantee' the right of every Nigerian to have access to land.

PARAGRAPH E

Daily Newswatch

-Tradition built on a will-

DAILY NEWSWATCH

EDITORIAL

MONDAY, JUNE 2, 2014

Awaiting FG's action on alarming oil thefts

Federal Government's apparent impotence in checking worsening and alarming oil thefts is simply amazing and does hurt the credibility and legitimacy of government. Officials have reeled out tales of woe with no respite in oil theft so much that speculations are rife that oil industry chieftains and political office holders were shielding perpetrators of the systematic ruination of the nation.

Analysis of Data

For the analysis, Halliday and Hassan's systemic functional model was adopted. A total of five editorial lead paragraphs with different levels of complexity were randomly selected for analysis. These lead paragraphs were analysed along graphitic/graphological levels as indicated below: Graphetic/Graphological Level

Graphology or graphemic refers confusingly to the study of handwriting as a means of character analysis. It

embraces other features associated with the written or graphic medium: *punctuation, paragraphing, spacing*. Different REGISTER make particular use of graphologic features as: *size of print and capitalization in newspaper and advertising lay-outs*.

Paragraph A

Newspaper: Daily Sun
Date: Wednesday, September 18, 2013
Number of Words: Thirty-six (36)
Context: The Central Motor Registration (CMR)
Sector of the Nigeria Police Abuja.

A. Graphological Analysis

Capitalization

The first letter ‘T’ of the first word ‘The’ drops and it is bold and single spacing. In the paragraph, all the initial letters that form the key words in the names of the establishments mentioned in the paragraph above are capitalized and they are:

- Nigeria Police Force (NPF)
- Central Motor Registry (CMR)
- Biometric Central Motor Registration (BCMR)

The effective month ‘September’ also has its initial letter in upper case.

The Full Stop (.)

In the above editorial lead paragraph “A”, there is only one full stop sign to mark the end of the sentence. This means that the lead paragraph is made up of one sentence.

The Comma (,)

In the paragraph there is only one comma. It is used to separate the date “from September 16” from the rest of the text.

The Hyphen (-)

Though, hyphens are often used to join words or parts of words. In the above paragraph, hyphens are used at the end of lines where words have been split probably to warn the readers or audience(s) that the words continue on the next lines. The words are:

Po-lice	(lines 1 and 2)
an-nounce	(lines 2 and 3)
Reg-istry	(lines 5 and 6)
Biomet-ric	(lines 6 and 7)

Abbreviations

In the paragraph A above, there are three (3) abbreviations in brackets and they are (NPF), (CMR), and (BCMR). In each case, the full name of the organization is spelt out at first mention as shown below:

- Nigeria Police Force (lines 1 and 2)
- Central Motor Registry (lines 5 and 6)
- Biometric Central Motor Registration (lines 6 and 7)

Paragraph B

Newspaper: The Guardian
Date: Wednesday, May 15, 2013
Number of Words: Twenty-two (22)
Context: The Education Sector

A. Graphological Analysis

Capitalization

The first letter 'N' of the first word 'Nigeria' drops and it is bold. In the paragraph 'B' above, the first letter in the first word – a proper noun which is *Nigeria* has initial upper case. Furthermore, the first letter in *Universal Basic Education For All* are capitalized without abbreviation which would have been (UBEFA).

Exclamation Mark (!)

In order to mark the end of sentence/paragraph under study, the board uses an exclamation mark which expresses some degree of excitement.

The Comma (,)

There is only one comma that marks off the first three digits (2000), from the last three (000) indicating the actual figure as two hundred thousand – 2000,000.

The Hyphen (-)

In the paragraph, there is no hyphen.

Others

Finally, the year is in figure and not in words.

Paragraph C

Newspaper: Sunday Independent
Date: September 1, 2013
Number of Words: Thirty-six (36)
Context: National Population Commission (NPC)

A. Graphological Analysis

Capitalization

The first word *CHAIRMAN* in the paragraph is in upper case. In the paragraph, the initial letters of the establishment National Population Commission and the abbreviation (*NPC*) are capitalized. The initial letters of the first and second names of the chairman of National Population Commission Festus Odimegwu and Federal Government are also in upper cases.

The Full Stop (.)

In lead paragraph (C), there is only one full stop that indicates the end of the sentence/paragraph.

The Comma (,)

There are three comma signs – the first one marks off the abbreviation – (NPC), the second one separates “Festus Odimegwu” which is an apposition to “Chairman of the National Population Commission (NPC) from the rest of the text and the third comma separates the date “1816” from the rest of the text also.

The Hyphen (-)

There are three hypens used to join words at the end of lines where words have been split probably to notify the readers or audience(s) that the words continue on the next lines. The words are:

an-wered (lines 3 and 4)
cen-suses (lines 6 and 7)
funda-mentally (lines 3 and 4)

Abbreviation(s)

In this paragraph, there is only one abbreviation in bracket after the full name of the organization is spelt out as shown below:

National Population Commission (*NPC*)

Paragraph D

Newspaper: Daily Trust
Date: Monday, June 2, 2014
Number of Words: Fifty (50)
Context: National Conference

A. Graphological Analysis

Capitalization

The letter “A” drops and it is bold. In the paragraph, the first letter A is bold in upper case and capitalized. The initial letters of “Land Tenure Matters and National Boundaries” are capitalized. In addition, the initial letters of “National Conference”, “Land Use Act”, and “Nigeria” are also capitalized.

The Full Stop (.)

In lead paragraph (D), there is only one full stop that marks the end of the sentence/paragraph.

The Comma (,)

There is no comma sign in the paragraph.

The Hyphen (-)

There is no hyphen in the paragraph.

Abbreviation(s)

There is no abbreviation in the paragraph.

Quotation Marks (‘ ’)

Single quotation marks are used in the word ‘guarantee’.

Paragraph E

Newspaper: Daily Newswatch
Date: Monday, June 2, 2014
Number of Words: Sixty (60)
Context: Oil Industry

A. Graphological Analysis

Capitalization

Letter “F” drops and it is bold. In the paragraph, the first letter of the first word drops and it is bold in upper case. The initial letter in the word “Government” is also in upper case. Another word whose initial letter is in upper case is the first word “Official” in the second clause of the paragraph.

The Full Stop (.)

In lead paragraph (E), there are two full stop signs. Each full stop marks the end of each clause. This means that there are two independent clauses in the paragraph.

The Comma (,)

In paragraph (E), there is no comma.

The Hyphen (-)

There is no hyphen in the paragraph.

Abbreviation(s)

There is no abbreviation in the paragraph.

Quotation Marks (‘ ’) or (“ ”)

There is no quotation mark in the paragraph.

The Apostrophe (’)

In the paragraph, there is only one apostrophe used to show the subject’s possessive case as in: *The Federal Government’s...*

Summary of Graphological Analysis

The breakdown of the punctuation marks usage is as follows:

Types of Punctuation	Paragraphs					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	
Capitalization						
- Initial	<i>The</i>	-	-	<i>A</i>	<i>Federal</i>	03
- Full cap	-	<i>Nigeria</i>	<i>Chairman</i>	-	-	02
The Full Stop	1	-	1	1	2	05
The Comma	1	1	3	-	-	05
The Hyphen	4	-	3	-	-	07
Abbreviations	3	-	1	-	-	04
Exclamation Mark	-	1	-	-	-	01
Quotation Mark						
Single ' '	-	-	-	1	-	01
Double " "	-	-	-	-	-	00
The Apostrophe	-	-	-	-	1	01

The above table clearly shows at a glance, the graphological pattern of the editorial lead paragraphs of the selected Nigerian newspapers. Generally, there are three main classes of words which are capitalized: proper names, key words in titles, and the first word of sentences. In this study, it was observed that the first word in lead paragraphs “B”, “D” and “E” all have initial capital letters as in *The*, *A*, and *Federal* respectively while in paragraphs “A” and “B”, the first words: *NIGERIA* and *CHAIRMAN* are capitalized. Furthermore, the initial letters in the words of lead paragraphs “C” (*Daily Sun*), “D” (*Daily Newswatch*), and “E” (*Daily Trust*), are fore-grounded because they all dropped in bold forms while *NIGERIA* and *CHAIRMAN* in paragraphs “A” and “B” as earlier stated are fully capitalized.

There is only one full stop sign each in lead paragraphs “A”, “C”, and “D”. They functionally, mark the end of the paragraphs. The existence of one full stop each in the paragraphs also denotes that each paragraph comprises one sentence each. Paragraphs “B” has an exclamation mark (!)

which, functionally, also marks the end of the sentence/paragraph with some degree of excitement. In paragraph “E”, there are two independent clauses with a full stop sign at the end of each clause. Furthermore, it was also observed, from the paragraphs studied that apart from hypens which were used to join words at the end of lines where words have been split probably to notify the readers or audience(s) that the words continue on the next lines, only abbreviations bracketed alongside the full name of the organizations they stand for are prominent in paragraphs “A” and “C” as in:

Paragraph “A”

Nigeria Police Force (NPF) (lines 1 and 2)

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