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Linguistic analysis of some selected Ghanaian newspaper

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a commanding instrument, especially when used deliberately and purposefully. It can be used in used in diverse ways in order to climax and influence a message.

Without compatible to rules, the primary function of language as a tool for communication may be compromised since meaning can be changed merely by the addition or omission of even just a little element in a grammatical structure. It is, thus, imperious for the language user to aim at ameliorating his/her language by following prescribed rules. The refinement or furtherance of a language largely depends on the proficient and careful enactment of its rules of grammar. By the bettering of a language, one understands little else than the extensive teaching of its just forms, according to equivalence and the general convention of the most precise writers (Agu, 2015).

According to him, journalists are trained to use language in special ways that could enhance the overall development of any society, or they may end up ripping the whole land apart if language is not properly controlled. It is an established fact that every field of human endeavour has certain linguistic features that make its language divergent.

The media is a linguistic mediocre, especially the print media and electronic. Language is one of the most important vehicles for the exchange of ideas. This paper is primarily concerned with a linguistic-stylistic analysis of the language of the media text. By insinuation, what it entails is that there are certain linguistic singularities that make the style of media text unique. According

to Agu (2008), the study of style among other things involves an examination of syntax, diction, idioms, and imagery. At its simplest level, syntax refers to the structure of sentences; diction is the writer's choice of words and manner of deploying them to achieve maximum artistic effects. As noted earlier, the study of style also involves an examination of the writer's use of figurative language and other related devices such as idioms and imagery. These aspects of language, according to Agu (2008) are used to give a written work verbal beauty, economy of words and structure and thematic depth. What it all adds up to is that we have to examine very briefly what institutes the language of the media, especially as it affects the language of newspaper stories.

The study of news reports in the press is one of the major tasks of discourse-analytical media research. Linguists analyse how language can indicate underlying philosophies. Articles in newspapers as well as the information given to the public by renown people in the society can be inferred and remodeled in different ways, especially the tribute read by the late Vice President Amissah Arthur's wife: "They can be summed up, abridged, polarised, exaggerated and personified. A transformation of the original account of the event in question is presented to the reader in such a way that it may affect his/her view of the world" (Nordlund, 2003:8).

Text is a structured unit consisting of smaller units. It is "a stretch of language which makes coherent sense in the context of its units. It may be spoken or written; it may be as long as a book or as short as a cry for help." (Quirk et al. 1990: 434). To achieve the unity, continuity and fluency of the text, "English sentences can be linked in various ways, among which repetition of an element and back reference by means of pronouns are among the more important." (Halliday and Hasan 1976, in: Vestergaard and Schroder 1985: 18). Other techniques are also used to join sentences together, for example, we use synonymy, place and time relaters, determiners, pro-forms (pronouns, pro-verbs, and other pro-forms), ellipsis, enumeration, parallelism (repetition

of sentence structure), conjunctions and various transitions. All these 'sentence signals' refer back or forward to neighboring sentences.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Since media plays vital role in our current dispensation and vehicle for mass education, it has become necessary to assess the usage of language in the media text.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Language, as a social practice, involves multifaceted and complicated social issues. Hence, different events may be represented ideologically in the media in general and newspapers in particular. There is no doubt that investigating some authentic sources like newspapers are beneficial in depicting the ideological manifestations of this study.

Idiomatic constructions "An idiom is an expression (i.e. term or phrase) whose meaning cannot be deduced from the literal definitions and the arrangement of its parts, but refers instead to a figurative meaning that is known only through conventional use. In linguistics, idioms are figures of speech that contradict the principle of compositionality (the principle, which tells that the meaning of a complex expression is determined by the meanings of its constituent expressions and the rules used to combine them.)." (http://www.wikipedia.org/). Idioms have multiword character, they are fixed and they have common figurative meaning. The phrase 'to be in the same boat' has the literal meaning 'to be in the same boat', and also the idiomatic figurative meaning 'to be in the same difficult situation'. A proverb is a type of idiomatic construction. It is "a well-known phrase or sentence that gives advice or says something that is generally true." (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2001), e.g.: 'Too many cooks spoil the broth.' means that if too many people are involved in something, it will not be well done.

Syntactic aspect

Four sentence types can be distinguished here, namely declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives and exclamatives. Following definitions of each of them are quoted from Quirk et al. 1990: 231. "Declaratives are sentences in which it is normal for the subject to be present and to precede the verb. Interrogatives are sentences, which are formally marked in one of two ways: yes-no interrogatives (an operator is placed in front of the subject), and wh-interrogatives (an interrogative wh-element is positioned initially and there is generally subject-operator inversion). Imperatives are sentences, which normally have no overt grammatical subject, and whose verb has the base form. Exclamatives are sentences which have an initial phrase introduced by what or how, usually with subject-verb order." To these types of sentences are normally associated four discourse functions: statements, questions, directives and exclamations. However, the association between syntactic type and discourse function does not always match, as the following case shows: "Give me a glass of water." is an imperative, a directive. "Could you give me a glass of water?" is an interrogative, but semantically, it is a directive, more precisely an indirect command. A statement can also function as an indirect command: "I'm thirsty." So, can exclamations: "What fresh cold water. There is one other sentence type plentifully presented in advertisements –exclamatives. The use of exclamation marks is very liberal and widespread. (We may notice that exclamation marks are more frequently used in exclamations than in imperatives in English; that is why it is called 'exclamation mark' and not 'imperative mark'; while in Slovak the exclamation mark is more often used in imperatives than in English.) "And, it's already wrapped!"

Exclamations may have the sentence structure as simple statements, but the exclamation mark tells us to read them emphatically.

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Sentence structure

In media text, there is structure of sentences. Parallelism is one of the forms of schematic pattering. It can be defined as "repetition of formal patterns" (Leech 1972: 186). Parallelism means the parallel presentation of two or more than two similar or relevant ideas in similar structural forms. It is a rhetorical device heightening the emotional tone of the message and its importance. We offer here an example of parallelism of clause with the same structural pattern: "Tips for a good night's sleep:- Drink less caffeine. - Take warm baths. - Arrange your insurance with NFU Mutual."

Each clause has the same idea and structure beginning with verb in imperative following by direct object. The typography and layout often contributes to the text; in this case, each clause is printed in separate line. The last clause makes up a semantic and formal parallel to first two clauses. Parallelism is often accompanied by - anaphora – "the repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of several consecutive sentences or verses to emphasize an image or a concept" (http://www.wikipedia.org/): "Explore the hills. Explore the rivers. Explore the mountains. Explore the sea." – epiphora - "the repetition of the same word or words at the end of successive phrases, clauses or sentences." (http://www.wikipedia.org/)

We suppose that an antimetabolite is another form of schematic pattering. It is defined as "the repetition of words in successive clauses, but in reverse grammatical order, e.g. 'I know what I like, and I like what I know'." (http://www.wikipedia.org/): "Instead of moving the furniture around, why not move around the furniture?" Schematic pattering occurs in all levels of language. Anaphora, epiphora, alliteration, assonance and antithesis also belong to techniques of schematic pattering.

Semantic aspect

Each linguistic expression has its literal meaning. Literal meaning denotes what it means according to common or dictionary usage (or more exactly, what "the reader is most likely to assign to a word or phrase if he or she knows nothing about the context in which it is to be used." (http://www.wikipedia.org/)). The same linguistic expression, however, may have also its figurative meaning. It connotes additional layers of meaning and evokes associations; for example, the word 'professional' has connotations of skill and excellence. It is not possible to give an exhaustive account of the connotations of the expression, because connotative meanings, which have been evoked in an individual, depend on people's entire previous experiences and on conventions of community. Therefore, the connotations of the same expression will differ slightly from person to person. Furthermore, the same denotations can have different connotations in different context.

 According to Widdowson (1990: 86), "… grammar is not a constraining imposition but a liberating force: it frees us from a dependency on context and a purely lexical categorization of reality." Given that many learners – and teachers – tend to view grammar as a set of restrictions on what is allowed and disallowed in language use – a linguistic straitjacket" in Larsen-Freeman's words (2002: 103) – the conception of grammar as something that liberates rather than represses is worth investigating.

Metalinguistic discussion (i.e, the use of grammatical terminology to talk about language) is seen by Stern (1992:327) as one of the characteristics of explicit grammar teaching. According to Burgess and Etherington (2002), teachers believe that their students see grammatical terminology as useful and that its use does not present a particular difficulty for students. Descriptive

grammarians acknowledge the fact that language is dynamic and its use is constantly changing, although not in major ways, the problem for ESL/EFL- English as Second Language/English as Foreign Language- learners, however, is that there is a time-lag between the awareness of such changes and their acceptance as the proper use of the language according to Lester (2005). As Morelli (2003) has observed, "Grammar can be taught traditionally or contextually, but student perception should be considered by teachers in the decision-making process. Students need to feel confident that educators have met their and educators should be willing to consider the attitudes and perceptions of students when making decisions about how to teach grammar."

Concord

English grammatical concord is very important for correct English usage. Lutrin and Pincus (2004) define concord as that in which the words in a sentence must match or agree with one another. Concord, according to Duskova (1977) is agreement in gender, case, number or person between different words that share a reference. Yankson(1994), sees concord as the necessary agreement/coherence needed in a sentence/statement to yield a flawless grammatical structure. As to what informs this unfortunate attitude of non-adherence to the rules of concord on the part of both native and non-native students, one has to probe through research.

The basic concept behind each of the aspects of concord according to the above cited scholars are explained briefly in the ensuing paragraphs. Subject- Verb concord operates under the principle that singular verbs should go with singular subjects whilst plural verbs should go with plural subjects. This type of concord has in it, some intricacies which many a student has fallen victim to in one way or the other. These intricacies lie in six identified sources of errors: typical

development errors, notional concord errors, proximity concord errors, memory limitation concord errors, plural inflectional concord errors and the inability to identify noun headwords.

Noun-Pronoun agreement on the other hand ensures that the appropriate pronoun should be used to replace a noun, both in terms of number and gender. "My niece has lost his pen" and "Students don't take his studies seriously'', are thus inaccurate grammatically because there is no concord between "My niece" and "his" in the first sentence and "Students" and "his" in the second sentence as gender and number are disregarded.

Verb-Verb concord is guided by the principle that when a number of verbs (two or more) are found in a construction, they should agree in terms of tense (present or past). Where there is tense disagreement, the reader or listener is confused about time in an expression. She came and take the gun and shoot herself , is for instance wrong because we are left in the dark as to whether the actions conveyed in here are habitual or not. Finally, the rule behind Point of time past-Verb concord is that a point of time past element (e.g, yesterday, in those days, that morning, etc.) must always take on past tense verbs only. I sleep late last night is thus incorrect since there is no agreement between "sleep", the verb and "last night" the point-of-time-past element.

METHODOLOGY

This section deals with the methodology that the researcher used which involves sampling, instrument, data collection procedure and method of data analysis.

Sampling

Due to limited time at the researcher' disposal, he was unable to unearth all the media text available. The researcher employed accidental sampling and purposive sampling procedures to get the units for the study. The 2017 publications were selected for the study. The researcher could not use all the newspapers publications this year because of the limited time he had for the work. Accidental sampling was used that is whatever newspaper he came across then he used. Three newspapers were sampled, namely The Mirror, Ghanaian Times and The Spectator. One media text was selected from each newspaper.

Data collection procedure

The researcher went to University of Cape Coast main library to read the newspapers selected and made photocopies.

Method of data analysis

The researcher used mixed approach for the data analysis. The data was analysed using a statistical tool called Statistical Package for Social Science which the linguistic analysis of media text results were being put in the form of tables and being interpreted.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section dealt with the analysis of data collected. The analysis was based on the linguistic aspect of the media text. The emphasis was the lexical structure, vocabulary, parts of speech, syntax, types of sentence structure, and grammar.

Lexicon

Media text	Number of lexicon
The Mirror	9
The Spectator	13
The Ghanaian Times	24

From the three of the newspapers sampled, there were not much vocabulary items used in two of them, namely "The Mirror" and "The Spectator." From the analysis, it was realized that "The Mirror" newspaper recorded the lowest lexicon (lexicon). "The Ghanaian Times" newspaper recorded the highest (24) vocabulary usage, followed by "The Spectator" newspaper (13). This means that some of the readers of "The Ghanaian Times" would find it difficult to comprehend the text. In The "Mirror newspaper", words such as "boon", "benevolence" and "refraction" were encountered by the researcher. Words such as "empowered", "empathize" and "advocacy" were also observed. In The "Ghanaian Times" newspaper, the researcher also witnessed vocabulary such as "obscuring", "alignment" and "transformation"

Parts of speech

Media	Adjectives	Adverbs	Prepositions	Conjunctions
The Mirror	25	18	113	12
The Spectator	37	122	57	26
The Ghanaian Times	34	12	134	22

The researcher looked at the choice of words and how they were used in the three media text. Even though there are eight parts of speech, the researcher considered four of them namely, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions. From the three media text analysed, it was seen that in relation to the adjectives, "The Spectator newspaper" (37) had the highest adjectives usage, followed by "The Ghanaian Times" newspaper (34). "The Mirror" newspaper (25). The high usage of adjectives by The Spectator newspaper indicates that the writer of the text was able to provide additional descriptions of whatever he or she was describing. In effect, it will help easy understanding of "The spectator "newspaper. In this case, the adjectives limit, add, change, or identify some specific detail about the noun or pronoun they modify. For example, in The Spectator newspaper, one see something like, "Participation is a **complex** multidimensional…"

Analysis on adverbs also showed that The "Spectator newspaper" (122) had the highest, followed by "The Mirror" newspaper (18) and "The Ghanaian Times" (12). In an effect, the highest number of adverbs encountered in the "The Spectator" newspaper means that the writer was able to provide information about the manner, place, time, frequency, certainty or other circumstances of the activity denoted by the verb or verb phrase. For example, in "The Mirror",

one could see "I find it **very** strange…" "The Ghanaian Times" (134) also had the highest prepositions in the course of the text analysis which was followed "The Mirror" (113). "The Spectator" had the lowest with (57). A meaningful usage of prepositions in The Ghanaian Times newspaper implies that the various parts of the text were well connected. This shows cohesion and coherence in the text. For instance, "Benefit package **in** view **of**…" The last parts of speech to look at are the conjunction. From the analysis, it was realized that "The Spectator" newspaper (26) recorded the highest conjunction and the second highest was "The Ghanaian Times" (22). The Mirror had (12). Since conjunctions are used to connect words, phrases, clauses, or sentences, their usage would bring order, coherence, unity and cohesion in the text. For example, in the Spectator, there is an instance like "**Since** I took office,…"

Sentence structure

Media	Simple	Compound	Complex	Compound-complex
The Mirror	6	8	5	3
The Spectator	6	5	4	0
The Ghanaian Times	12	11	5	3

In the analysis of the media text, the researcher also considered the structure of the sentences used in the text. The analysis indicated that there was variation of sentence structure. In relation to the simple sentence, The Ghanaian Times recorded the highest (12). Both "The Mirror" (6) and "The Spectator" (6) had the same number of sentences. Since simple sentence contains one

idea, at times, it is easy to understand. Another structure of sentence that the researcher discovered was compound sentence. For example, in "The Ghanaian Times", Simple sentences like "Participation is a complex, multidimensional, value laden concept" can be found. The media text analysis also showed that compound sentences were also used by the writers. The "Ghanaian Times" had the highest recordings (11), followed by "The Mirror" (8), and "The Spectator" (5). The use of compound sentence creates sentences that are more useful than writing many sentences with separate thoughts. They express our thoughts in a way that allows out audience to receive information easily and quickly. Compound sentences are the best way for communicating. An example of compound sentence from "The Spectator" is "She is an accomplished programmes Manager and Facilitator with reputation in NGO…"

The analysis of the media text also showed that all the media text made use of complex sentence structure. Both "The Mirror" and "The Ghanaian Times" had the same number that is 5 each. The "Spectator newspaper" had 4. Complex sentence is very good in media text because it help the writer to combine ideas in an interesting way. When one uses that in the media text, the variety helps you avoid choppiness and dull repetition. An example of a complex sentence can be seen in the Spectator that is "Coming on board with her 15years experience in development practice, Mrs. Asante Apeatu also intends to make empowerment…"

The last part of structure of sentence to discuss is the compound-complex sentence. During the analysis of the media text from the "Spectator newspaper" had nothing and "The Mirror" and 'The Ghanaian Times' had 3 each. The use of compound-complex sentence in the media text implies that the writer is able to elevate credibility: it demonstrates that he or she can bring together in a single sentence a range of different pieces of information and order them in

relationship to each other. When compound-complex sentence can bring confusion if not handled well but if carefully handled, can clarify the complexity and enables readers to see it clearly.

Concord

Media	Subject-verb	Verb-verb	Noun-pronoun	Point of time past-verb
The Mirror	24	8	8	5
The Spectator	20	9	5	8
The Ghanaian Times	29	7	6	0

In analyzing the media text, the researcher also looked at the grammar of the text which concord was considered. In this the case, the writer looked at the various forms of concord. This concord deals with grammatical agreement between two parts of sentence. With the subject-verb concord, "The Spectator" paper had the lowest number (20), followed by "The Mirror" (24) and the highest being "The Ghanaian Times" recorded (29). "The Spectator" (9) newspaper recorded highest for the verb-verb concord, followed by "The Mirror" (8) and "The Ghanaian Times" (7) to be the lowest. In relation to the noun-pronoun concord, "The Mirror" had (8) to be the highest, and "The Ghanaian Times" also had (6). Only (5) was found in The "Ghanaian Times". "The Spectator" newspaper had (8) for the point of time past-verb concord and 'The Mirror" had (5). Nothing was found in "The Ghanaian Times" newspaper. Concord is very essential because it is used to describe the relationship between the inflectional forms of different elements within a sentence. Concord helps in producing Standard English sentences.

Dangling Modifiers, Modification and Ambiguity

Media	Dangling modifiers	Modification	Ambiguity
The Mirror	1	43	1
The Spectator	1	159	1
The Ghanaian Times	5	46	0

In the media text analysis, there were not much problems relating to dangling modifiers and ambiguity among the three media text sampled. "The Mirror" paper recorded (1) dangling modifier and (1) ambiguity. The Spectator also recorded (1) dangling modifier and (1) ambiguity but The Ghanaian Times recorded (5) dangling modifiers without any ambiguity recorded. It means that the issues presented in the three media text were a bit understandable. The readers could not read much different meaning to the content. A text which is full of dangling modifiers and ambiguity makes its reading difficult to understand. A lot of modifications were used by the writers in the three media text. The "Spectator" newspaper recorded (159) modifications, followed by the Ghanaian Times recording (46) and the last to be The "Mirror" recording (43). Modification is very necessary in enhancing the understanding of the media text.

Figurative expressions

Media	Figurative expressions
The Mirror	3
The Spectator	3
The Ghanaian Times	2

Figurative expressions are very important in media text but their overuse also creates misunderstanding of the text because not everybody who can easily understand the meaning of the phrases used. In the media text analysis, it was seen that The "Mirror" newspaper recorded only (3) figurative expressions. "The Spectator" also recorded (3) and "The Ghanaian Times" recorded (2). Due to the caliber of audience of the media text, figurative should not be used much in the media text. This is due to some people's inability to comprehend them.

Conclusion

This paper tried to examine the linguistic aspects of media text. It subjected the stories to areas such as the lexis, parts of speech, and sentence structure, grammar which include concord, figurative expression, ambiguity, modification and dangling modifiers. In all, it was discovered that journalists write from different perspectives. Some journalists are trained professionals who can use language to assume different roles. One could see that every journalist has his or her own way of writing.

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