



## Stylistic Choice of Sentences and Clausal Patterns in “Daily Trust” And “Sahara Reporters” Newspaper Editorials

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper investigates the stylistic choice of sentences and clausal patterns to establish the selection that writers of editorials make from the available sentence types and clausal patterns. The aim is to find out whether the stylistic choices they make are a manifestation of individual editorials or a trend of modern writers of the editorials. To do that, twenty-four sentences have been chosen from “Daily Trust” editorials and “Sahara Reporters” of 2021. The sentences are described in a tabular form according to the sentence type, number of clauses in a sentence and how the clauses are related. The analysis reveals that the two paper editorials have the same choice of complex sentences far more than other types. The editorials also have similar ways in which the clauses relate one to the other as most of the clauses are related through rank shifting and embedment. Also, neither editorial has clauses that are related through coordination. This implies that the stylistic choice of the sentences of the editorials is a manifestation of the editorials of the modern time. They however differ in the number of clauses that the majority of the sentences have. While “Daily Trust” has most sentences with two clauses, “Sahara Reporters” has four to eight clauses in a sentence. This means the sentences in “Daily Trust” editorials might be understood more easily. The study recommends that less number of complex sentences should be used and more simple and compound should be selected to facilitate comprehension.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The study is conducted to investigate of the sentences and clausal patterns of the two newspaper editorials: “Daily Trust” and “Sahara Reporters”. It is meant to reveal the stylistic choice of the sentences and clause types in order to identify their similarities and differences. Stylistics is generally defined as the study of style choice in different writings and that is in line with the present study. The aim is to find out whether the stylistic choices of the sentences and clause types are a product of the group of newspapers or a product of modern way of writing. To do that, twelve sentences are taken from the editorials of the newspapers each and the editorials are from the year 2021. Sentences are taken from the first,

third and fifth paragraph of the four editorials of each of the two newspapers. A total of twenty-four sentences are discussed in terms of their simplicity and complexity, whether majority are simple or complex is stated and how does that contribute to the understanding of the message. The clausal patterns of the sentences are also discussed in terms of their dependency and interdependency. Whether clausal patterns are joined through compounding or by the process of rank shifting and or embedding and how has that made the meaning of the editorials clearer? Research questions to be answered include:

1. What is the composition of the sentences?
2. How are the clausal patterns made?

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3. Are they the product of the individual media houses in terms of style or the modern style of presentation?

### Style

The word style is etymologically derived from the Latin word “stylus” which means pointed object and latter, it meant pointed object used for writing, (Umar, 2021). The word in the medieval period underwent some theoretical classification as rhetoric which is categorized into three: low (plain) style, the middle (mean) style and the elevated (grand) style. This means that the word style has undergone several changes in terms of its use not only in language but also in everyday life. Collaborating this view, Azuike, (1992) observes that there is no one definition of the word style because the concept is nebulous. He further opines that in linguistics, several characteristics of the word style exist with some overlapping while others contradictory and that six rubrics under which the broad perspectives and concepts are discussed are:

- i. Style as deviation from the norm;
- ii. Style as manifestation of an individual;
- iii. Style as content and or form;
- iv. Style as choice between alternative ways of expressing the same idea;
- v. Style as product of context, and
- vi. Style as good or beautiful writing.

In line with the above description of style, the study makes its analysis to establish whether the style chosen are alternative ways of expressing the content or message of the editorial or manifestation of the individual writers of the editorials.

Gull (2021) traces the description of style to the classical period which links style to the school of rhetoric as part of techniques of persuasion under oratory. According to him style latter became a term which connotes a characteristics use of language. Leech and Short (1981:9) define style as “generally referring to the way in which language is used in a given context by a given person for a given purpose”. They also observe that style belongs to *parole*: the selection from the total linguistic repertoire. This means

style can be seen as the linguistics habits of a particular time, genre, period, school of writing etc.

Also Gull (2021:3) states that style is defined “according to the linguistics school of thought, its orientation according to the writer’s personality, impression of readers, and individual text and the collective features of a genre” . He also says that the linguistics notion of style is style as a choice, as registers and as deviation.

Umar (2021) gives different definitions of style by herself and in many other authors as follows:

**Style as personality-** This sees style as the idiosyncrasies manner and habits of a particular writer. This implies that style is like a signature of a particular person.

**Style as ornamentation** – This means what the writer has to say and how he says. It is referred to as “dress of the thought” which can be seen in the use of figurative language or any general linguistic feature imposed on a text.

**Style as a Choice** – This is a choice from different linguistic alternatives. It can be between lexical forms, syntactic resources etc. (Kate and Wale 2001:158).

**Style as Variation** – this believes that language provides its users with alternative ways of saying the same thing so the consistent choice by a writer or speaker becomes his style.

**Style as Deviation** – This is a choice of style that is different from an established pattern or norm. “It is the style of discourse that the message is carried by the frequency of distribution and transitional probabilities of its linguistic features as they differ from the whole (Block, 1953:40)

**Style as Connotation** – this is of the view that linguistic feature is derived from textual or situational phenomenon.

From the literature reviewed above it is observed that the term style is a wide term because it covers so many areas. Style is used in the current study as the characteristics of a group, alternative way or manner of writing or a manifestation of the writing of a particular period. Thus, the analysis is on whether the sentences and clausal pattern manifest the writing of a group, individual newspaper house or alternative ways of writing.



## Stylistic

Leech and Short, (1981) state that stylistic is generally defined as the linguistic study of style. Umar (2021) defines stylistics from different authors as follows:

Stylistic is "the description of literary text by methods derived from the general linguistic theory, using the categories of language as a whole. The comparison of each text with others with the same and by different authors in the same and different genres (Halliday, 1964). Stylistic is the study of language and how this results from the intralinguistic feature of a text in relation to nonlinguistic framework of the text (McIntyre, 2010)

Stylistics is the study of varieties of language whose properties position that language into context and tries to establish principle capable of accounting for particular choice made by individuals or social group in their use of language. (crystal, 1980). Stylistic is an interdisciplinary term – a study of literary discourse from linguistic orientation. It has no domain of its own, (Widdowson 1975). Stylistic is "an approach to the analysis of literary text using linguistic description" (Short, 1996:1). He also opines that stylistic is a method of textual interpretation in which the primacy of place is assigned to language because the forms, patterns and levels that constitute linguistic structure are important in determining the function of a text and that the function of a text as a discourse acts as a gateway for its interpretation. Also, contributing to the meaning of stylistic, Domingo (2021) opines that stylistics is the yoking of style and linguistics and that it is the use of language in different ways with the purpose of achieving common goals which is to negotiate meaning.

In the current paper, stylistics is defined as a study of style in any piece of writing or text, using linguistic tools at any level. The choice could be determined by an individual, group, situation, genre, period etc. The choice is usually made from the resources of language that are available to the user. For example, at the level of words, a writer can choose between abstract or concrete, ordinary or Latinate word etc. At the level of group, a writer may decide to choose noun, adjective,

adverbial or any group. At the level of clause, relative, nominal, or adverbial clause could be chosen. At the level of sentence types, simple, complex, compound etc could be chosen. Thus, the study focuses on the stylistic analysis of the sentences and clausal patterns to enable it find the type or variety that has been chosen from the linguistic repertoire. The choice could be a departure from the norm, the idiosyncrasies of the writer or the manifestation of a group.

## Clause

The English clause is defined in different but related ways by different linguists. In traditional grammar, it is defined as a composition of words which has subject and predicate, (Alobo, 2008). Leach and Jan, (1975), opine that clauses are principal structures on which sentences are composed and a sentence may be composed of one or more clauses. This gives us the value of the clause as a grammatical unit.

On the other hand, Quick, Green Baum, Leech, , and Jan, (1985) describe the clause as a unit that can be analyze into elements. This is clear because a clause can be realized by different elements depending on a type of verb. Systemic functional grammar sees the clause on the rank scale as a structural unit next above the rank of the group and next below a rank of a sentence. This description is based on the provision of grammatical rank scale in systemic functional linguistics.

In this paper, a clause is seen as a unit of higher status than the phrase. It has subject and predicate and may be dependent or independent in a sentence. In other words, the clause is a syntactic construction containing subject and predicate and forming part of a sentence or capable of being a sentence. This is perhaps Green Baum and Wilson (2009) rational for their description of a clause as a sentence like construction. This means that a clause can be a single sentence if independent and can be within a sentence to form other types like compound, multiple or complex. A clause can be subordinated to a main clause by way of embedment or rank shifting.

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As we can see from the definition, the clause is a very important linguistic unit that is germane to the description and analysis of a sentence structure. To collaborate this, Farida,Ojo and Yeno (2015) note that clause is the most central to the analysis of a sentence by accounting for the internal constituency and very central to the grammatical rank shift embedment and configuration of a sentence. Thus, it is the basic structure of language because at least one is needed to make a sentence though a sentence can have many number of clauses. In view of the importance of a clause, Gelderen (2013) argues that "it is the most widely studied phenomenon within syntactic theory because it refers to how words and sentence are embedded within sentence and their relationship to each other within a sentence and ultimately how sentences are layered within the brain.

### The sentence

The English sentence is described by systemic functional linguists as the highest grammatical unit, (Tomoris, 1977, Morly, 1985 and Holliday, 1985). This is because other grammatical units like morphemes, words, groups and clause exist in other higher units. Tomori (1977) describes the sentence as the most difficult linguist term to define because it lacks an inclusive definition that can combine the distinctive feature of a written and spoken sentence. Egbe (2000) emphasizes the complexity of the definition of the sentence by asserting that "the sentence is the largest unit for syntactic analysis and its constitute structure most complex."

Thus, a sentence has been defined differently by linguists but the one that fits the present study is defined as follows: It is a grammatical unit that is syntactically independent and has subject that is expressed or in imperative sentence understood and a predicate that contains at least one finite verb. It is the sequence of words capable of standing alone to make an assertion, asks question or give a command (the free on line dictionary). Similarly, an online (oxford dictionaty.com/definition/English/sentence) states that a sentence is "a set of words that is complete in its self typically containing subject and predicate, conveying a statement, a question, exclamation or command and consisting of a main clause and sometimes one or more subordinate clauses.

Furthermore, Broderick (2004) describes the sentence as "as an arrangement of words where the words act on one another, specifying and even changing one another's meaning and thus, expressing relationship and connection among the entities to which the word refers". He further states that the position of each word in each phrase and each phrase in each clause is precisely determined and defined by syntactic principles. Boderick's description of the sentence is perhaps the more elaborate because it involves the arrangement of words which have to be in proper order, the words act on one another, specifying and changing the meaning of one another to express relationship among the entireties to which they refer.

**Table 1:** Sentence taken from the Editorials of the two Newspapers, their description according to their types, number of clauses and how the clauses are related

| S/N | SENTENCE  | TYPE    | NO. OF CLAUSES | HOW CLAUSES ARE RELATED     |
|-----|---|---------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1.  | <u>We wonder if NAFDAC actually monitored the agencies, including EMA, to which Russia belongs.</u> | Complex | 4              | Embedment and rank shifting |
| 2.  | <u>Also, Nigeria wants pharma company to show their vaccine know- how study.</u>                    | Complex | 2              | Embedment.                  |
| 3.  | <u>The agencies were granted access to dossiers and prior assessment reports</u>                    | Simple  | 1              | -----                       |

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|     |   |         |   |  |
|-----|---|---------|---|--|
|     | of the modern and Astrazeneca from WHO website over the past six months.  |         |   |  |
| 4.  | <u>The Nigerian custom service, NCS, has made a landmark achievement, reporting of sum of ₦ 1. 003 trillion in the first half of the year 2021, HI' 21.</u>   | Complex | 2 | Embedment.                                 |
| 5.  | <u>The custom revenue has been on astronomical increase year in year out.</u>   | Simple  | 1 | -----                                      |
| 6.  | <u>We join them to wonder how the revenue growth is recorded in an economy under recession for some of the periods, compounded by the advent of Covid 19.</u>   | Complex | 4 | Embedment and rank shifting.               |
| 7.  | <u>The move to establish the electoral offence commission is one of the redeeming features of the ongoing attempt to reform elections.</u>  | Complex | 5 | Embedment.                                 |
| 8.  | <u>The 1999 constitution (as amended) vest both regulatory and operational electoral powers to INEC.</u>  | Complex | 2 | Rank shift.                                |
| 9.  | <u>The commission should be to electoral fraud what the Economic and financial crime is to corruption.</u>  | Complex | 2 | Rank shift.                                |
| 10. | <u>Insecurity in Nigeria in recent years has been signposted mainly by terrorism.</u>   | Simple  | 1 | -----                                      |
| 11. | <u>NOTICE: This is to inform you that, we, thieves are coming to rob every house in your community or you should contribute the sum of ₦20, million and keep it with your community chairman for us to pick when we come.</u> | Complex | 7 | Ranking shift, embedment and coordination. |
| 12. | <u>The disturbing aspect is that in spite of the danger of being videoed with the over present cameras, these devil – may – care robbers no longer even care to cover their faces with masks.</u>                             | Complex | 6 | Ranking shift and embedment.               |
| 13. | <u>Of late, the Central Bank of Nigeria has been on the news.</u>   | Simple  | 1 | -----                                      |
| 14. | <u>Otherwise, the news policy direction detailed by the CBN are consistent with dirigiste mindset that saw the Bank build up huge liabilities in the last half decades in the name of supporting economic growth.</u>         | Complex | 5 | Rank shift and embedment.                  |
| 15. | <u>There is less charity on how much the Central Bank has committed today to its retail lending, these so called intervention programme.</u>  | Complex | 4 | Rank shifting and embedment.               |

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|     |   |         |   |                           |
|-----|---|---------|---|---------------------------|
| 16. | Olusegun Odebumi, the sponsor of the bills before the House of Representatives for the amendment of the National Broadcasting act (2010), otherwise referred to as NBC act and the Nigerian pre- council act (1992) has maintained that his actions are independent of any vested interest, with repeated claims that it is driven by the need to regulate what he considers as an unregulated media. | Complex | 8 | Rank shift and embedment. |
| 17. | Premium times is of the opinion that the under – sea drum beating, propelling the macabre dance round attempt at the legislative curtailment of press freedom in Nigeria is the Buhari’s government seeming genetic abhorrence of media independence, and certainly, high voltage intolerance of freedom of expression, especially critical and dissenting type.                                      | complex | 6 | Rank shift and embedment. |
| 18. | Any doubt about the motive of these regulations should have been now cleared, with NBC’s latest martial order restraining the broadcast media from the activities of reporting insurgence and terrorist, while specifically warning against the way and manner newspapers are reviewed on air.  | complex | 5 | Rank shift and embedment. |
| 19. | In a moment of anger and lack of critical reflection unbecoming of a democratic elected government with complete disregard to our rights, the Buhari’s administration on June 4 <sup>th</sup> , announced an indefinite band on the operations of the :micro – blogging and social network service, twitter in Nigeria”.  | complex | 4 | Embedment.                |
| 20. | Mr. Adeyemi stated further that federal government has also directed that the National Broadcasting Commission, (NBC) to immediately commence the process of licensing all OTT and social media operations in Nigeria.  | complex | 4 | Rank shift and embedment. |
| 21. | The argument advanced in Adeyemi’s press release not withstanding, Nigerians are not oblivious of the reason why the rash dancing was taken- the taken down of President Muhamadu   | complex | 6 | Embedment and rank shift. |

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|     |  |         |   |                           |
|-----|--|---------|---|---------------------------|
|     | <u>Buhari's twitter handle for twitting what was interpreted as a thread genocide or bloody suppression against a section of Nigerians populace.</u>   |         |   |                           |
| 22. | <u>The storm surrounding the minister of communications and Digital economy, Isa Ali Pantami, highlights the fragility of democracy and its guard rails in Nigeria and the arduous task required to strengthen the nation's brittle social political fabric.</u>   | Complex | 4 | Embedment.                |
| 23. | <u>This is necessary to protect the modest democratic gains that Nigeria has made over the past 21 years under the hard won forth republic, and assuage reasonable fears about the integrity by government its agencies and officials, alongside the commitment to values that under pin a united and prosperous nation.</u> | complex | 7 | Rank shift and embedment. |
| 24. | <u>Although the newspapers promptly withdraw after it became clear it was false.</u>   | complex | 3 | Rank shift.               |

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The sentences from numbers one to twelve are from the "Daily Trust" editorials, nine of the sentences are complex while three are simple. The sentences are categorized according simple, complex and compound only. There is no use of compound sentences in the sentences. Four out of the sentences in the "Daily Trust" are composed of four to seven clauses, while five have two clauses and three are composed of only one clause. This shows that majority of the sentences are complex and majority also are composed of two clauses.

In terms of the relationship between the clauses, the study shows that the three sentences are related by rank shift and three by embedment, two rank shifting, one has rank shifting, embedment and coordination while only three are simple or single clauses. There is no clause that is related by the process of coordination only. This implies that majority of the clause are related through the process of rank shifting and embedment.

The numbers from thirteen to twenty-four are taken from "Sahara Reporters". The study

shows that eleven sentences are complex while only one is simple. The numbers of clauses that made up the sentences are comprised of four to eight clauses, while one has three and only one has a single clause.

The relationship between the clauses according to the study is as follows; Eight of the clauses are related through rank shifting and embedment, two through embedment only, one through the process of rank shift, while one is a simple clause. This means majority of the clauses are related through rank shifting and embedment.

The analysis shows that the stylistics choice of the sentences for both "Daily Trust" editorials and "Sahara Reporters" is complex. Complex sentences formed the majority of the sentences selected by both editorials. The study concludes that complex sentences are the choice of editorials writing against the simple or compound sentences. While "Daily Trust" has majority of the sentences being composed of two clauses, "Sahara Reporters" has four to eight clauses with majority of the sentences. This means the choice of clauses is a manifestation of

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the individual editorial writers. There is an agreement between the two editorials in terms of how the clauses are related. Both of them have rank shifting and embedment with majority of the clauses. This implies that the stylistic choice of relationship between the clauses is a manifestation of the modern editorial writing.

## CONCLUSION

The study is done to identify the stylistic choice of sentence types and their clausal pattern to see whether the choice is a stylistic characteristic of the individual editorial writers or that of a group of the newspaper of the modern time.

The analysis shows that complex sentences are the stylistic choice of the modern editorial writer. It also shows that the sentences differ in terms of the composition of number of clauses. "Daily Trust" editorials have more sentences with only two clauses while "Sahara Reporters" have more sentences with four to eight clauses. On the other hand, both editorials have rank shifting and embedment as their relationship among the clauses. From the study, "Daily Trust" is likely to be understood faster than "Sahara Reporters" because they have less number of clauses in their sentences.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Having studied and analyzed the sentences of the two newspaper editorials, the following recommendations are made: Although editorials are mostly meant for the ruling class because they are commends on some decisions taken by them, the sentences should be less complex. Sentences should vary from simple, compound and complex but the majority should be simple sentences.

The composition of sentences with four to eight clauses should be discouraged because it makes the sentences to be more complex. Also the relationship of the clauses with having embedment, rank shifting and coordination should be discouraged because it makes the sentences to be more complex. It will be better to have more sentences with single clauses, clauses coordinated by conjunction and rank shifting.

Others should be used sparingly. Since the sentence and clause types have more similarities than differences, the complexity of the sentences and clause types should be reduced to enable readers have easier access to the content of the editorials.

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