A stylistic study of selected headlines of the Nigerian *Vanguard* newspaper

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ABSTRACT
The study investigated the stylistic features of Nigerian Vanguard headlines. In order to achieve the objective of the study, the stratified sampling method was used to collect 120 headlines published between January and December, 2014. Both qualitative and quantitative were used for data analysis . The qualitative method enabled the author to account for the motivations for the use noted language features, while the quantitative method helped to account for the preponderance of certain language features to the exclusion of others . To identify and explain style features in the selected newspaper headlines, Halliday's functional stylistic theory was applied. The study analysed the graphological, grammatical, lexical and other notable language features to establish elements constituting the style of Vanguard Newspaper headlines. The findings showed that certain linguistic features were highlighted for the functions they were made to perform in the headlines. Such notable features included the use of certain punctuation marks, capitalization, colours; choice of lexical items, grammatical categories and structures; and others such as the use of elision, acronyms, fronting, amongst others.
KEYWORDS: Style , Stylistics , Newspapers, Headlines

I.   INTRODUCTION

Newspaper headlines, in recent times, have attracted considerable interest in academic discourse. Scholars have tended to account for the features of newspaper headlines from different perspectives. Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska (2014) studied the use of coercive metaphors in newspaper headlines; Ehineni (2014) studied lexical and functional heads in Nigerian English newspaper headlines. Also in a related study , Ehineni (2015) studied syntactic government in Nigerian Newspaper headlines. On the other hand, Renata Mozuraityle studied the stylistic features of *Telegraph* newspaper of London. However, no study has been conducted exclusively on the stylistic features of *Nigerian Vanguard* headlines. This study, therefore , focused on the stylistic features of *Nigerian Vanguard Newspaper* headlines with a view to expanding the discourse on newspaper headlines.

1.1 Style

Style as a concept in language study, has attracted much attention, as scholars attempt to identify and explain its features (Crystal and Davy, 1969; Leech, 1969; Leech and Short, 2002). According to Leech and Short (2007:10), style "is the way in which language is used in a given context by a given person for a purpose." On the other hand, *The New Webster's Dictionary of English Language* defines style as "the distinguishing way in which something is done, said, written, made, executed, etc; the distinctive character of a particular school or type of music, painting, architecture or writing." To *Webster's Universal Dictionary & Thesaurus*, style is "the manner of writing, painting, composing music peculiar to an individual or group." Leech (1969) also describes style as foregrounded linguistic features that are characterized by deviation. To him, such deviations call attention to themselves and could be located across the various levels of linguistic organizations, such as grammar, lexis, phonology, semantics and so on.

From the above definitions, it is obvious that style pervades all the areas of human interest . It could also be associated with individuals, groups, periods, regions and manners. It is however important to note that a key feature of style is the distinctiveness quality that tends to set entities apart. In the context of this study, style is taken as distinctive features that characterize the language use of an individual or group exhibited in the composition of *Vanguard Newspaper* headlines.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Newspaper headlines are very important in information dissemination in a society. They are printed in bold letters below the masthead of a newspaper organization. Their main purposes are to attract attention and at the same time, disseminate information to a large number of people at the same time. According to Molek Kozakowska (2014:23) "The headline has to realise several functions at once: introduce the issue covered in the news articles, generate audience interest in it and indicate the news outlet's attitude towards it". The impacts of headlines in influencing public opinions have made their study a compelling one to reveal their structures and socio-political significance. Ehineni (2014) studied the lexical and functional heads in Nigerian newspaper headlines. According to the author, the data for the study were collected from notable Nigerian newspapers such as The *Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *Vanguard* and *The Sun*. In order to achieve the object of the study, the author applied x-bar theory of Generative Grammar to the analysis of data. The findings showed that both lexical and functional heads were projected in Nigerian newspaper headlines. He also noted that sentence type headlines had more heads than phrasal headlines and that lexical heads had more projection than functional heads. In a related study, Ehineni (2015) studied syntactic government in Nigerian newspaper headlines using the Generative Grammar approach. The data for the study were randomly selected from national newspapers, such as The *Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *Vanguard* and *The Sun* . The study focused on head-government, theta-government, lexical-government and antecedents-government. He observed that all the forms noted above operate in Nigerian newspaper headlines, but noted that head-government and theta-government were not always visible at the S-structure of the headlines unlike at D-structure where it was very explicit.. He also noted that lexical-government and antecedent-government operate in headlines when movement had taken place since they both dealt with government of a trace.

In contributing to the understanding of newspaper headlines, Molek-Kozakowska (2014) studied the use of coercive metaphors in newspaper headlines using a cognitive-pragmatic approach. The data for the study were samples of metaphors excerpted from a corpus of 400 most read headlines from *Daily Mail* website. The author adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. The study found that there were the use of coercive metaphors for the purposes of simplification, imaging, animalization, confrontation, (de) legitimization, emotionalization and dramatization. On the other hand, Mzuraityle (2015) studied the stylistic features of the headlines of *The Telegraph* of London focusing on the spatial features. The data for the study consisted of 200 headlines. The author employed both descriptive and statistical methods of data analysis. Some of the findings included the use of short words, the use of loaded words, the use of noun phrases and nominalization, amongst other features.

III. METHODOLOGY

The data for this study consisted of 120 headlines from *Nigerian Vanguard newspaper* published between January and December, 2014. This meant that a total of ten headlines were collected from each month in the time period The method adopted for data collection was a stratified sampling method. This method involved the collection of data using definite parameters. The twelve month period covered in the study was divided into three-time intervals of 1st- to 10th, 11th to 20th and 21st to 30th. In each interval, three headlines were randomly selected to make nine. The remainder of one to make ten for each month was randomly selected from any of the intervals. The advantage of this method was that it made data collected more representative of the phenomenon under investigation. The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analyses. The qualitative method invites the researcher to make recourse to his previous knowledge and repertoire of experience in the process of data interpretation. One major advantage of this method is ifs fluidity and tendency to accommodate new insights that were not envisaged at the outset. On the other hand, the quantitative method enabled the researcher to account for the preponderance of certain features to the exclusion of others, and offer explanation where necessary.

IV. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Stylistics

Stylistics is a linguistic approach to the study of language use in context. According to the *New Encyclopedia Britannica,,* stylistics is "the study of devices in language (such as rhetorical figures and syntactic patterns) that are considered to produce expressive or literacy style. To Leech (1969: 60), " it is an attempt to find the artistic principle underlying a writer's choice of language as all writers and texts have individual qualities. " In a similar vein, Widdowson (1996:138) states : "Stylistics …is the study of the social function of language…to characterize texts as process of communication. It is not part of its purpose to provide a means of discovering the different social functions of language. It is technological rather scientific in that it works on data provided by others." Contributing to the explanation of stylistics, Davy and Crystal (1996:10) state the object of stylistics thus:

The aim of stylistics is to analyze language habits with the main purpose of identifying from the general mass of linguistic features common to English as used on every considerable occasion, those features which are restricted to certain kinds of social contexts; to explain where possible why such have been used as opposed to other alternative and to classify this features into categories based upon the view on the function in the social context.

They further identify the levels of linguistic analysis in a stylistic enterprise to include phonology, graphology, grammar, lexis and semantics. This is also the position of Leech and Short (2007) and Halliday (1969).

4.2 Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Halliday's theory of functional stylistics. The theory is based on his earlier functional theory of language that seeks to explain language use based on the functions it performs in the society. In commenting on the relevance of the theory to the study of stylistics, Halliday (1996:57) states: "I find this approach valuable…for the insight it gives into the nature and use of language, particularly so in the context of stylistic study". In explaining the theory, he adopts two terms: foregrounding and prominence. According to Halliday (1986:64), "foregrounding…is prominence that is motivated. He explains that patterns of prominence in texts are regularities in the sounds or words or structures that stand out in some ways, or may be brought out by careful reading. According to him, "one may often be led in this way towards a new insight, through finding that such prominence contributes to the writer's total meaning…a feature that is brought into prominence will be 'foregrounded' only if it relates to the meaning of the text as a whole." This explains the view that any language element, regular or irregular, which is linguistically highlighted, as long as it contribute to the communicative value of the text is stylistically relevant. He states further that there is no regions of language where style does not reside. Halliday demonstrates the application of the theory to the study of William Golding's *The Inheritors*. This approach to the study of stylistics is quite different from that of Leech (1969) that sees style as foregrounded language features that are marked by deviation. Halliday' functional theory of stylistics has been adopted by Roger (1977) and Enkvist (1964). The theory is quite suitable for the present study because it gives the author the opportunity to identify and explain language features that are stylistically significant based on their functions in the text composition process.

V. ANALYSIS

5.1 Graphological Analysis

Crystal and Davy (1969:10) describe graphology as "the analogous study of a language's writing system. punctuation and paragraph as well as spacing." On the other hand, Katie Wales (1989:213) describes graphology as "the writing system of a language as manifested in the hand writing and typography, and to other related features noted in the spelling, italicization.The study of graphology involves the examination of a writing system to account for such language features as capitalization punctuation marks, boldening, colour and all others that help to achieve communicative effectiveness in a text. Below are the examination of some of the graphological features noted in the data

(1)   Punctuation marks

Punctuation marks are marks used in writing to indicate pauses and voice modulation in texts. They serve as guides to grammatical composition of texts. Some notable punctuation marks in English are full stop, comma, colon, semi colon, question mark, quotation mark and hyphen.

(a)   Full Stop (.)

Full Stop is one of the end markers used in English. Notably, it is used to indicate the end of a declarative sentence.

(1) Jonathan, Obasanjo meet over Boko Haram (28th Aug., 2014)

In the above headline, full stop is not used. This is the case of all the headlines studied. The reason for this is that the information conveyed by a full stop is taken as given. And, in a newspaper headline, full stop is considered to be bland and superfluous since it does not communicate any new message in the context. The absence of full stop is quite significant in the charaterisation of newspaper headlines as full stop is rarely omitted in longer texts.

(b)   Comma (,)

Comma is one of the noted punctuation marks. It is principally used as asyndentic conjunctions to link words that would have been linked by the use of 'and'. These are some examples of the use of comma in the data:

(2)   Presidency, Amech's war deepens (27th Oct., 2014)

The use of comma in the contexts above, which requires the conjunction, 'and' helps to achieve the purpose of using scant words in the composition of newspaper headlines. So the use of comma has a utilitarian function of making headlines terse, and thus helps to maximize the use of space.

(c)   Colon (:)

This is the most frequently used punctuation mark in the data under study. It is used to introduce further comments on a given subject matter that is reported. Below are some examples:

(3)   GOVT SHUTDOWN:
          Presidency dares APC (20th Jan.2014)

(4)   2015 : Jonathan not acceptable (1st Nov, 2014)

In the examples presented above, colon is used to introduce further comments that are aimed at clarifying the subject matters reported. Through the use of colon, the headlines are able to introduce a subject matter and also present a position within a limited space. The high incidence of colon in the composition of headlines is necessitated by the general tendency to give voluminous information within a limited space. This helps to achieve the object of compactness in newspaper headline crafting.

(d)   Dash (--)

Dash is also notable in the data. It is used to attribute utterances to speakers in the headlines. It is used instead of inverted commas to show reported speeches. Below are some examples.

(5)   Sanusi under probe for terror financing—DSS 1st April, 2014

(6)   My plan for this year—Jonathan   1st Jan., 2014

(7)   How Njako can be saved—PRESIDENCY 9th July, 2014.

The use of dash in the above examples helps to introduce the authors of the texts making up the headlines. In addition, the use helps to confer credibility on the information reported. Also, the use of dash as opposed to inverted commas gives the writer the opportunity to make both lexical and syntactic choices in order to reflect his attitude and perspective. It is also noted that the use of dash helps for unimpeded reading.

(e)   Apostrophe mark (')

Apostrophe marks is used majorly to show possession and omission of letters in English compositions. In the headlines studied, it is principally used to show omission of letters. It should be noted that both letters and words are generally omitted to maximize the use of space in newspaper headlines. In the data studied, apostrophe mark is used to indicate omission of letters.

(8)   I won't leave office till June 2 Sanusi (10th Nov., 2014)

(9)   Why Jonathan has failed defeat to B'Haram (27th Nov., 2014)

As could be observed above, apostrophe mark is used to indicate omission of letters to achieve the twin purposes of conserving space and maximizing the information given.

(f)   Other punctuation marks

Other noted punctuation marks used are question mark, exclamation mark, semi-colon and hyphen. Their uses in the data are not notably significant.

Below is a tabular distribution of punctuation marks used in the data studied.

Punctuation marks	Number	%
Full stop	-	-
Colon	43	36
Comma	32	26
Dash	30	25
Hyphen	-	-
Apostrophe	11	9.1
Question	1	0.8
Exclamatory	3	2.5
Semi colon	1	0.8
Total	120	100

From the distribution, it could be observed that the semi colon is the most frequently used punctuation mark, accounting for 36%. This is followed by the comma (26%) and dash (25%). The use of apostrophe mark is also significant. One important revelation is that end markers are rarely used in headlines. For instance, there is no single use of the full stop, while question mark and exclamation mark have only an instance each. The above showed that graphological features are very important in the artistic composition of newspaper headlines. This finding contrasts sharply with the position of Leech and Short (2007:105) where they assert that graphological variations are minor and superficial part of style. This view may be true in literary and other longer compositions, not newspaper headlines.

2 The Use of Capitalization

Capitalization is unusually used in the headlines. It is noted that not only the initial letters of proper nouns or the initial letters of the words at the beginning sentences are capitalized as demanded by the rule of English. In the data, entire words or phrases are capitalized. These are some examples:

(10)   CAPTURE OF BORNO TOWNS:
                    Reputation of Nigerian military at stake—US   5th Sept., 2014.
(11)   CHIBOK GIRLS ABDUCTION:
                    30 days after, parents identify 77 girls in video 14th May, 2014.

In the above examples the noun phrases; 'Capture of Borno towns' and 'Chibok girls abduction' are unusually capitalized. The capitalized sections of the headlines call attention to themselves, therefore amplifying the information reported. Arising from the above observation, it could be said that the use of capitalization in newspaper headlines is motivated by relevance.

 3 The Use of colours

The dominant colour for writing the headlines under study is bold black. There is however, a noted tendency to contrast this colour with other clours like red, pink and white. These colours, when so used, besides amplifying the information given, reflect the attitude and emotion of the writers towards the information presented

5.2 . Grammatical Categories

This section studies sentence types and clausal structures to reveal motivations for their uses.

(a)   Sentence types

The sentence type is predominantly simple sentences. This is used to achieve clarity and simplicity for the ease of understanding. Another noticeable feature of the data is the preponderance of declaration sentences, to the near exclusion of other sentence types. For instance, out of 94 sentences identified, 90 are declarative sentences, while 3 are exclamatory with only one interrogative.

(b)Sentence Structure

Another noticeable grammatical feature of the headlines is the structure of expressions used. The following were noted: sentence structure, Adverbial clause structure and verbless clause structure. Below are some examples.

(a)   Sentence Structure
(12)   FG introduces austerity measure 17th Nov., 2014.
(13)   Nigeria must be saved from evil people—Jonathan 6th Jan., 2014.
(14)   Ebola nurse flees Lagos for Enugu   14th Aug.,2014
(b)   Adverbial Clause
(15)   Why Jonathan fired service chiefs 17th Jan., 2014.
(16)   How I survived Ebola   29th Aug., 2014
(c)   Verbless Clause
(17)   My marshal plan to save Nigeria—Buhari 16 Oct., 2014.
(18)   Fearful Easter 14th April, 2014.

From the above examples, the grammatical structures of headline could be understood. In the first type headlines, complete sentence are used. This means that subjects and predicates are present. In the second type , that is, adverbial clause type, the main clause is omitted. In the third type, that is, verbless clause group, the verbs are omitted. The distribution of the various grammatical structures in the data coul be seen in the table below:

Sentence	94	78%
Adverbial clause	8	7%
Verbless	18	15%
Total	120	100%

It is observed that the different grammatical structures used in the data are dictated by style exigency. Newspaper headlines, though characterized by omission of words, there is always commitment to the clarity of information. This accounts for the high percentage of full sentences in the composition of *vanguard newspaper* headlines.

5.3 Lexical Categories

(1)   Words Classes

There is a noticeable preference for content words as against structural words. Notably, nouns and verbs are the most Commonly used. This helps for the concretization and visualization of information presented. On the other hand, there is near absence of articles, conjunctions, prepositions and auxiliary verbs. Articles, conjunctions, notably coordinating conjunctions are completely absent. The conjunction 'and' is regularly replaced by a comma. However subordinating conjunctions such as 'as' why and 'how' are used. In addition to preposition are use to textualize the seemingly disparate texts that make up the headlines. It is to be noted that the absence of articles, coordinating conjunctions and auxiliary verbs is a device used to maximize the economy of space in newspaper headline composition.

(2)   Lexical categories

The stylistically relevant lexical categories considered are adjectives, verbs and conjunctions.

(a)   Adjectives

Adjectives are rarely used in headlines as they are considered superfluous. There is however the tendency to use nominal adjectives and others to convey the attitude of the writer to the information being presented. Below are some examples.

(19)   Benue gov, Fulani herdsmen in gun battle 12th March, 2014.

(20)   Ebola nurse flees Lagos for Enugu   14 Aug., 2014.

In the above examples, nouns: 'Benue', 'Fulani', 'Ebola' are used as attributive adjectives to qualify the nouns they follow. The use of the adjectives in the contexts are dictated by the need for clarity, which mean that their uses are motivate by relevance.

(b)   Verbs

Verbs are very important in English as they are used to denote action or a state. In the context of this study, verbs are very significant as they give headline writers the opportunity to exhibit their preference in terms of lexical choices. A careful examination of the data shows that the writers have preference for transitive verbs. This makes it possible to achieve the object of sensationalism that headlines are noted for. Some examples are given below:

(21)   Henry <u>beats</u> jail 11th Feb., 2o14

(22)   Panic as Ebola <u>hit</u> Kaduna   3rd Sept., 2014

(23)   Ogoni youth protest given on Abe   14th Jan., 2014

(24)   GOVT SHUTDOWN:

Presidency <u>dares</u> APC   21st Jan.,2014

The words to the extent that they call attention to themselves are foregromded and therefore constitute stylistic features.

The verbs in the headlines above are transitive verbs. Though their transitivity they highlight both the subject and object for adequate information. There are few intransitive verbs, while the verb 'be' is rarely used. This is the practice of most media houses in the crafting of headlines as noted by Mardh (1980. This could be explained from the perspective that the verb 'be' performs a linking function that add no new the information to the facts reported.

(c)   Conjunction

Conjunction is used in English to link grammatical units, thereby achieving cohesion. They are majorly of two types: coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. In the data, there is a complete absence of coordinating conjunctions. The only instance of conjunctions used in the data are subordinating conjunctions. Below are some examples.

(25)   How Njako can be saved—PRESIDENCY   9th July, 2014.

(26)   Why Jonathan has failed to defeat Boko Haram 27th Nov., 2014.

(27)   Why we invaded N/Assembly—Police   22nd Nov., 2014.

In the above examples, the subordinating conjunctions: 'how', 'why' are use to introduce the adverbial clauses (subordinate clause). In the instances, the use of the conjunctions help to create suspense as they indicate reason (adverbial clause of reason) and manner (adverbial clause of manner) of actions yet to be known by the readers.

 5.4. Others

(1) Parallelism

The use of parallel syntactical structures is also noted in the headlines under study – Below are some instances:

(28)   EKITI ELECTIONS

            Fayose leads, APC kicks 22/6/14

(29)   Fulani attack Kaduna villages kill 32. 25/6/14

(30)   Benue gov, Fulani herdsmen in given battle.12/3/14

In the examples given above, similar syntactic structures are repeated. In the first, clausal structure of subject and verb are repeated, while in the second verb and objects are repeated; in the third, two subjects:"having similar syntactic structure of Adjective are repeated. The use of parallel structures as noted above helps to create rhythm and poise thereby contributing to the artistic beauty of the headline

(31)   The use of changed words

There is the predilection to use words that show confusion, contest, acrimony, and war. Some examples could be seen in the following:

(32)   Why Jonathan <u>fired</u> Sanusi   17th Jan., 2014

(33)   APC membership registration:
                Fear <u>grips</u> PDP   8th Feb., 2014

(34)   Armed men <u>invade</u> Enugu Govt house 9th March, 2014

(35)   Terror

Shut up   20th March, 2014.

These words shut up in addition to other noted strategies help to amplify information presented in order to achieve sensationalism.

The Use of Alliteration.

Alliteration is used in the headlines under study. Below are some examples.

(36)   Naira in free fall against dollar   19th Nov., 2014.

(37)   12,000 lives lost to Boko Haram—Jonathan   18th May, 2014.

In the first example above, the labio-dental fricative /f/ is repeated at the beginning of the words: 'free' and 'fall' to create an instance of alliteration . This is further reinforced by the repetition of the internal consonants /r/ and /l/, alveolar laterals in 'Naira' and 'free', and in 'fall' and 'dollar' to create sound effects that contribute to the artistic realization of the headlines. The above explanation also applies to the second example.

(38)   Metaphor

There are instances of humanizing metaphor in the data studied. They are realized by attributive adjectives. Below are some examples from the data:

(39)   Fearful Easter   12th April, 2014

(40)   BLOODY WEEKEND IN BORNO

60 Killed in fresh Boko Haram attacks   14th April, 2014

In these examples, *Easter* and *weekend* are imbued with human capacity and quality. Through the use of these metaphors, the writers are able to paint a picture of fear and trepidation occasioned by the event being reported.

(41)   The Use of Acronyms

Acronyms are words formed from the initial letters (or longer part of words) that make up a descriptive phrase or a proper name (Quirk et al 1979:1031). Some are pronounced as sequence of letters, while others are pronounced as words. There are some instances of acronyms in the data under study.

(42)   FG introduces austerity measure   17th Nov., 2014.

(43)   EKITI ELEECTION

Fayose leads, APC kicks   22nd June, 2014.

(44)   No plan for coup detat –CDS BADEH   19 June, 2014.

In the headlines above, acronyms are used. In the first example, 'FG' as used stands for 'Federal Government', while in the second example, 'APC' is used as an acronym for 'Action Party Congress". The use of acronyms as explained above is a feature of the headlines studied. It is important to note that the use of acronyms in headline composition is aimed at maximizing space, therefore the use is stylistically relevant.

(45)   The Use Emotive syntax

This aims at expressing the attitude of the speaker or writer towards what is said. According to Jakobson (1996:13) "it tends to produce an impression of a certain emotion, whether true or feign." Emotive utterances are realized by phonic, lexical and grammatical categories, and they generally communicative ostensive meanings that tend to constrain the cognitive meanings. There are examples in the data under study.

(46)   Boko Haram kills 42!   1st June, 2014.

(47)   Naira in freefall against the dollar   19th Nov., 2014.

(48)   OSUN TIGHT RACE

  Aregbesola leads!   10th Aug., 2014.

The headlines presented above show the use of emotive syntax as used in the data under study. The first and last examples above are exclamatory sentences. In English, exclamatory sentence is used to express intense emotions. In the above, the writer(s) conveys his emotion which could be excitement, disgust or disbelief about the facts reported. Also, in the second example, the use of the words 'free fall' indicate an attitude towards the subject matter of the report. It is to be noted that newspaper reports are noted for being

sensational and designed to change public mood and opinion. In this regard, the use of emotive syntax could be considered to be stylistically motivated.

(49)   Fronting

Quirk et al (1972: 945) explain fronting as 'marked theme' .It explains a process where words that would ordinarily not be used as a theme in a sentence, are used in such a position because of the intended communicative effects the speaker or writer hopes to achieve. According to Quirk et al (1972:946) " it is as if the thematic element is the first thing that strikes the speaker/writer and the rest is added as afterthought…the possible insertion of comma suggests that the non-thematic part is almost amplificatory tag." As could be observed, the use of fronting as a rhetorical strategy in text composition is motivated , and therefore stylistically significant. It is necessary to note that the use of fronting is quite pervasive in the data under study. Below are instances of fronting in the data under study.

(50)   Uproar, as Jonathan suspends Sanusi (21st Feb., 2014)

(51)   Rumpus in Senate over Rivers crisis 23rd Jan., 2014.

(52)   GOVT SHUTDOWN:
          Presidency dares APC   27th Jan., 2014.

(53)   MISSING SCHOOL GIRLS:
          We're close to abductors –DHQTRS   28th April, 2014.

The instances above illustrate the use of fronting in the data under study. In the first and second examples, 'uproar' and 'rumpus' are fronted in the headlines as their use in thematic positions indicate the orientation and interest of the news report. Also, in the last two examples, the noun phrases: 'GOVT SHUTDOWN' and 'MISSING SCHOOL GIRLS' are not just fronted, but also highlighted as their capitalizations indicate. The placing of the phrases in thematic positions, and accentuated by capitalizations, followed by amplificatory tags show the importance attached their use in the contexts. Fronted language elements also impact significantly on the readers as they tend to influence the interpretation of the facts reported. The use of fronting, therefore, in headlines is motivated as it helps to achieve the object of constraining the interpretation of reported facts.

(54)   The Use of Arabic Numerals

In the data under study, there is the consistent use of Arabic numerals in the reportage of figures. These are some examples.

(55)   Boko Haram kills 42! 1st Jan., 2014.

(56)   Troops kill 200 Boko Haram terrorists 18th Sept., 2014.

(57)   ZAMFARA MASSACRE:
          Death toll hits 200   7th April, 2014

In the headlines above, the Arabic numerals, '42' and '200' are used. It is hereby noted that the use is motivated by the need to maximize space. The use helps to make headlines compact.

(58)   Elision

Elision has been recognized as a feature of headlines (Mardh, 1980; Mzuraityle, 2015). This is where parts of sentences such as subjects, verbs (or parts of verb), main clauses, conjunctions, articles and so on are omitted in headline composition. In the data, there are instances of elision.

(a)   Elision of verbs

The verb 'be' and auxiliary verbs are rarely used as they are often omitted in the headlines studied. Below are examples of headlines where verbs are omitted.

(59)   2015: Jonathan not acceptable 1st Nov., 2014

(60)   Benue gov, Fulani herdsmen in gun battle 12th March, 2014.

(61)   Terrorists having upper hand—DANJUMA 14th July, 2014.

In the above examples, the verb 'be' are omitted.

 It is hereby noted that in some cases, the verbs and subjects are omitted. Below are examples where verbs and subjects are omitted.

(62)   My plan for this year—Jonathan 1st Jan., 2014.

(63)   My story—Sanusi Lamido 23rd Feb., 2014.

(64)   No plan to increase fuel 3rd Jan., 2014.

In the above examples, the subjects and verbs (be) are omitted. It is to be noted that the subject slot in the above examples accommodates only 'dummy' subjects (Quirk *et al* , 1972) which contain no information. This explains why such subjects are omitted in headlines as they maximize space for maximum information. The omission of verbs account for the high number of verbless clauses in the data.

(b)   Elision of main clauses

There are instances 0f omission of main clauses in the data. Below are some examples.

(65)   Why Jonathan has failed to defeat Boko Haram 27th Nov., 2014.

(66)   Why we invaded N/Assembly—Police 22nd Nov., 2014.

(67)   Why Jonathan fired service chiefs 17th Jan., 2014.

In the above examples, only subordinate clauses (adverbial) are used as headlines which means that the main clauses in the sentences are omitted. Beyond the general purpose of omission which is aimed at conserving space, the use of subordinate clause only headlines helps to create suspense and thus heightens the attraction for the news reported.

(c)　　　others

Other language elements that are omitted in the data are conjunctions (co-ordinating), articles and subjects.

(2)　　　Elision of letters

This is considered under graphology (see the use apostrophe marks). Generally, the elision of language elements in newspaper headlines helps to achieve compactness and elegancy in headline composition.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study was able to identify and explain language features that characterize the style of language use in *Nigerian Vanguard Newspaper* headlines. In doing this, the graphology, grammar, lexis and other notable language features were examined. For instance, in the graphological study, the use of punctuation marks, capitalization, colours and others are studied to show the motivation for their use. Als, in the grammatical analysis, sentence types and structures are studied. For instance, it was noted that simple sentences are predominantly used. It was observed that this aimed at achieving clarity. Also, the following grammatical structures are noted in the headlines studied: sentences, verbless clause and subordinate clause. In the study of lexical features, word choices, verbs, adjectives and conjunctions were studied. Beyond the above, other notable stylistic features such as the use of emotive syntax, fronting, metaphor, alliteration, amongst others, are studied to show their relevance in the realization of the object of headline composition.

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