

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

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ABSTRACT

Stylistics is an elastic area of study which covers almost all fields of study. However, in this study, the researchers examine the features of style used in journalistic reportage as contained in the three national dailies in Nigeria. The newspapers used in this study are: *The Guardian*, *Daily Post*, and the *Vanguard Newspaper*, where the data for analysis of this research are drawn. Through the lenses of Affective Stylistic Theory, the features of styles found in the papers as used in journalism today are listed, explained, and analysed with illustrating examples carefully selected from the newspapers. The pages from which the headlines are drawn are attached and analysed side by side in the body of the paper. As a result of the problems evident in the conceptualisation of stylistics, the researchers have chosen the theory that sums up the varying meanings attached to stylistics and the way in which language varies under the influence of factors such as context, purpose, writer, and period. The findings of the study reveal that the features of style used by the writers in these national dailies under review are deliberate as the particular choices made in their use of language created the intended effects on the readers.

Key Words: Style, Stylistics, Newspaper, Use Theory of Meaning

1.0 INTRODUCTION

When one takes a closer look at the possible range of meanings generated by language use and practice, it becomes clear how indispensable language is to humanity. While language remains a veritable tool for human communication, every human being uses language differently. This is where the concept of stylistics comes in. Stylistics is style, and every individual possesses their uniquely distinctive style when it comes to language use. Hence, it is apt to posit that style is like a fingerprint. This study deals with the description of the choices of linguistic expressions contained in the national dailies in Nigeria. The researchers aim to do a journalistic stylistic analysis of some select Nigerian newspapers, namely: *The Guardian Newspaper*, *Daily Post*, and the *Vanguard Newspaper*. The researchers intend to discuss the graphic and graphological style of the newspapers' headlines and cover pages, as well as to identify the extent to which their language attracts the attention of the reader.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts both primary and secondary sources of data collation. The study uses three national dailies, precisely, *The Guardian*, *Daily Post*, and the *Vanguard Newspaper* where the methodology for this study is drawn. The researchers randomly selected five headlines from each of the three national dailies, totalling precisely fifteen headlines and four cartoons. These are presented in picture forms and are immediately followed with analysis side by side for easy reference. The features of styles found in the selected national dailies are identified, explained, and analysed with illustrating examples carefully selected from the newspapers through the application of the Use Theory of Meaning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is stating the obvious to posit that every aspect of academic writing is viewed through the lenses of a theory, be it in sciences, social sciences, or humanities. It is the same in this paper; hence the study is situated within the framework of Affective Stylistic Theory. There are, however, different frames of stylistics that have been developed by different stylistics scholars. This is because stylistics is eclectic in its use of theory, though it originated from literary theories of formalism and took on the theory of structuralism in early twentieth century. "These theories..." according to Safa Naji, "were descriptive apparatus such as grammatical and lexical terminology and categories which enabled writers and scholars to present the techniques of construction that writers used in their works" (5). The researchers find it unnecessary to explore all the different approaches and frameworks before indicating the one that has been adopted for the current study, and thus briefly explains only Affective Stylistic Theory.

Naji opines that affective stylistic theory is "...derived from analysing further the notion that a literary text [or text] is an event that occurs in time – that comes into being as it is read – rather than an object that exists in space" (6). He further maintains that "the text is examined closely, often line by line or even word by word in order to understand how (stylistics) it affects (affective) the reader in the process of reading" (6). The implication of Naji's submission is that the text does not have a fixed meaning independent of readers because the text consists of the results it produces, and those results occur within the reader. This relates to the subject of analysis in this study.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section of the study gives brief elucidation of the key concepts relevant to understanding the analysis as well as findings of the study.

Therefore, concepts such as style, stylistics, newspaper headlines, and the Use Theory of Meaning are briefly explained in the paragraphs that follow.

Style

The word style has been defined by different scholars from different perspectives. From a general sense, style refers to the way something is made or done. It simply means a particular, distinctive mode of action or manner of acting. According to Joshua Agbo, in a lecture with his students on stylistics on 9th April, 2014, “[t]he best substitute of style is manner—the unique way in which things are done”. Style is always, to some extent, shaped by and stimulated by the writer or speaker (Hynes 55).

Stylistics

Like style, the word stylistics has various definitions. Matthews defines it as “the study of style in language: traditionally, of variations in usage among literary and other texts now more generally, of any systematic variation, in either writing or speech, which relates to the type of discourse or its context” (386). Michael Toolan, in his book titled *Language in Literature: An Introduction to Stylistics* views stylistics as “the study of the language in literature”. In his view “...one of the crucial things attempted by stylistics is to put the discussion of textual effects and technique. Stylistics is not only directed to works of literature it is equally used in other fields such as advertising, political discourse, legal pleading, journalism, pop-music lyrics...” (1).

Newspaper

A Newspaper on the other hand (often just called paper when the context is clear) is a periodical publication containing news, other informative articles, and usually advertising. The news includes political events and personalities, business and finance, crime severe weather and natural disasters, entertainment, society, sports etc. Newspapers are typically published daily or weekly. It is graphically designed to attract and grab the attention of information seekers. Good journalism has always been associated with competent writing and competent writing has always required an easy command of correct language and style. Graphically, newspapers are in different sizes and volumes. They are beautifully designed to attract the attention of readers or any passer-by (Sharndarna Mohammed 65). The photographs, especially on the cover pages, are designed with attractive colours. This inscriptions and headlines on the papers are mostly short sentences and are presented in bold prints in order to attract customers and make easy read. The features of stylistic journalistic reportage in the selected headlines which will be used for analysis in the next segment are briefly explained hereunder.

Simplicity

Simplicity as a feature of style in journalistic reportage is achieved by avoiding elegant words.

1. ‘About’ is better than ‘with reference to’
2. Fire ‘guts’ Daleko market is used in the Vanguard in place of Daleko market ‘destroyed by fire’.

Journalistic style of writing is simplified and long sentences are shortened so that it can be suitable for all readers: the highly educated and those with limited educational knowledge. Ambiguous words that cause difficulty in understanding the stories are avoided by all means. For example, the story in the Guardian of Sun 25-05-2014 Page 2 titled “five feared killed in fresh Jos explosion” contains simple diction which in turn makes the language simple to understand.

Compact

The language is usually compacted. It is usually short and the sentences, every word is selected and placed for maximum effect. This is seen especially on the title page where words are minced in order to catch the interest of the readers. For example, the vanguard of Monday May 19th 2014, boldly writes as its headline as “CHIBOK GIRLS: Boko haram soft-pedals.” The News Watch on the same day presented their main headline as follows “Boko-Haram hits Kano, kills 20” other titles in the Vanguard with captivating words include “2 customers officers arrested over rape of Facebook friend.” “Why we insist on Christian governor for Lagos-PFN.” Etc. Also, in the Guardian this feature of journalistic style is seen in the following headings: “Help fight Terror, Aliyu Begs IBB, others” “Real Madrid Rules Europe Again.” “Another Explosion in Jos.” All these titles on the cover pages are compacted in order to maximize space and time and used for stylistic effect.

Conciseness

The information is always direct and simple through elimination of unnecessary words and phrases. This feature is mostly found in the Vanguard newspaper where words without a direct proposition are neglected. The narration of stories is straight to the point without unnecessary use of figures of speech and other literary devices. They also avoid cumbersomeness without becoming repetitive in order to be effective as it can be seen from the examples below “Boko-Haram hits Kano, kills 20”. Where it would have been Boko haram hits Kano again and killed 20 people”. The Guardian simple puts a title as “Another explosion in Jos.” All these are made in a concise manner.

Directness

In journalistic reportage, writers go straight to the point as the name implies. There is no round-about narration. The writer does not beat about the bush. He wastes no time to hit the nail on the head. This feature is true as it can be seen in one of the reports in Vanguard Newspaper which is titled “2 Customs officers arrested over rape of Facebook friend”. They went straight to the point while reporting the incident. As compared to the Vanguard and the Guardian, the News Watch Newspaper is directed to the point in many of its stories.

Imagery

Another feature of style in journalism is the use of pictures to tell stories. The journalist uses images to expatiate his points. For example, in the Vanguard, the article titled “Beware! Pregnancy after 35 years may put you at risk” is illustrated and made attractive with a bare-chested pregnant woman on the front page of the paper. The pictures of a group of girls holding banner with the inscriptions “Bring Back our Girls” tell us that the girls are demanding the release of the abducted Chibok girls. In the Daily News watch cover page, you can also find this feature. The photo of Major-General Chris Olukolade, during surveillance on Chibok girls tells the story of what the Nigerian Defence is doing on the recovery of Chibok girls. The use of images is no doubt one of the commonest styles; the journalist uses to expatiate his points.

Pauperism

Journalism is “literature in a hurry.” Joshua Agbo in lecture with his students on stylistics on (8th April, 2014). It is done without much investigation. In journalism, the writer or reporter, faced with limited time, rushes over his stories and narrates them in a hurry. A story which would take a novelist 15 pages will be summarized and summed up in just one page or even a half page in journalistic reportage. For example, the story with the headline “30-year-old man

commits suicide in Oyo” which carries less than a quarter page of the newspaper would have taken more pages in literary writing. In Nigeria, investigative journalism is no longer practical. This aspect or type of journalism died with the late Dele Giwa in the nineteen eighties (1980s) because of the risk involved in it. Nowadays, journalists care not to write stories without investigating to get to the truth. Such stories are reported without valid sources of reference, without minding whether or not they have tarnished the image of the nation or an individual. (Agbo Joshua) this they do without delving to hear from the horse’s mouth. There is no investigation. Stories from the social media are sometimes printed without knowing their truthfulness.

Foregrounding

Some paragraphs in newspapers are given much emphasis by making them bold. This is done in order to draw a reader’s attention to such points. For example, let’s consider this one captured in the *Daily Post* newspaper on the topic “Over-celebrating corruption in Nigeria; this point is fore grounded as follows: “Corruption is everywhere but it is ever celebrated in the country to the extent that the nation and its people are stigmatized”.

Data Analysis

Stylistics displays multiple levels of analysis relating to various language study domains such as phonology, morphology, lexical classes, graphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis, as a result of its highly interdisciplinary nature. Style results from the many choices a writer makes in the course of writing. These choices set every writer apart from others; however, newspaper headlines share relatively common features apart from slight differences in style and organisation as can be seen in *The Guardian*, *Daily Post*, and *Vanguard Newspaper* from whence the data for this study is drawn. This study, therefore, presents the data in pictures and are immediately followed by the analysis which is done based the stylistic features of simplicity, compact, conciseness, directness, imagery, pauperism, foregrounding, and cartoons.

Data 1 “Kind words in Daura, toxic words elsewhere” (*Vanguard*, May 21, 2023 Page 1).



Simplicity

There is no denying the simplicity of this headline as it explicitly reveals the stylistic meaning conveyed through journalistic reportage. The writer makes use of spatial deixis such as ‘here’, ‘elsewhere’, and ‘Daura’, and person deixis, ‘Buhari’, to weed simplicity in the headline. The diction and simplicity of the headline help the readers to interpret the writer’s intended meaning without missing out. Here, the headline satirises President Muhammadu Buhari who is accused of being bias in his show of affection towards Nigerians.

Compact

In order to catch the interest of the readers, the words in this headline are minced, and this is deliberately done as a stylistic feature. The compact is heavily embedded in the opposing phrases “kind words” here and “toxic words” there.

Conciseness

The writer, in this headline uses extremely concise expressions to ease understanding and maximise space. This has helped in revealing the different personalities in the same individual who switches to kindness in certain location and wickedness in another based on the audience.

Directness

The language of the headline is direct as it precisely reveals the attitude of the president as alleged by the reporter. His body language tells the whole story.

Imagery

The reporter has used a picture of President Buhari holding a bag with the inscription “DAURA”, his hometown, where the headline confirms he uses “kind words”.

Data 2 “Over \$7.5b Spent on Transmission, Yet Darkness Persists” (*The Guardian*, Sunday, May 21, 2023. P2)



Simplicity

The simplicity of this headline is distinctive as it unveils the writer’s consciousness of an absent and imaginary reader that must be attracted. Here, the specific amount spent to ensure steady supply of electricity is mentioned, yet the country remains in constant darkness to which the reporter laments. The reader knows this truth from the words “\$7.5b spent on transmission, yet darkness persists”, as contained in the news headline.

Compact

The headline reveals the writer’s awareness of the limited space given to newspaper headlines. In achieving he falls back on the uses of compacted language.

Conciseness

Conciseness in this caption is achieved through the use of content words as modifiers, nominalisations, and complementary words are omitted.

Data 3 “Govt Okays Pay Rise For NARD To Halt Strike” (*The Guardian*, Sunday, May 21, 2023. P3)



Simplicity

The reporter, in this caption, has avoided using difficult words that warrant consulting a dictionary so that the reader can easily comprehend. This is why the word “Okays” is used instead of ‘authorises’, ‘assents to’, ‘institutionalised’ and “Pay Rise” instead of ‘salary upgrade’, ‘wage increment’. The writer’s preference for commonly used words is for the sake of simplicity which is a stylistic feature in journalistic reportage.

Compact

This caption confirms how the language of newspaper headline violates the rules of grammar and literary writings in order to achieve compact. Here, it can be observed how the word government is shortened as “Govt”, and the expression Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors is abbreviated as “NARD”.

Conciseness

In order to be concise, the reporter avoids stating the details of how the Federal Government, Nigerian Medical Association, and the Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors have sealed a memorandum of understanding aimed at halting the proposed strike by resident doctors.

Data 4 “I’d have slapped Kwankwaso if I met him at Villa, says Ganduje” (*The Guardian*, June 10, 2023)



Simplicity

This headline contains simple diction which in turn makes the language simple to understand. The writer ensures the caption is devoid of ambiguous words that cause difficulty in understanding the stories.

Compact

The caption contains compacted expression as every word is selected and placed for maximum effect. Hence, it is very short and the sentence specifically identifies the addresser and the addressee who appear to have fallen out of love with each other.

Conciseness

The writer, in his conciseness, has avoided feeding the caption with too many details. Instead, he focuses only on the key words that convey his intended meaning. Though very concise, Abdulahi Ganduje is able to express his resentment and dislike for Rabiu Kwankwaso. The details of their altercation is born out of the fact that Kwankwaso, through the incumbent Governor, engineered the demolition of buildings erected by the immediate past Governor of Kano – Ganduje. This appears to have deeply hurt his feelings to the point of wishing to slap Kwankwaso had they meet each other during their separate visit to the Presidential Villa.

Imagery

The use of imagery is seen in the picture attached to the headline. Here, the reader can see the picture of His Excellency Mallam Abdulahi Ganduje, the immediate past Executive Governor of Kano State. Beside the pointed finger, the expression on his face also conveys the meaning and intended actions behind his words which is ‘to slap Kwankwaso if he had ran into him in the Villa’.

Data 5 “Tinubu suspends Emefiele as CBN Governor” (*The Guardian*, June 09, 2023)



Simplicity

The simple style adopted in this headline is to capture the validity of the moment and allow the readers to relive the experience. The story surrounding the adoption of the cashless policy was a very sensitive one that needs no twisted, complex, rhythmical descriptions. One needs to read and understand deliberations on it without brain bombardment of thoughts. The question on the lips of many Nigerians has been when will Godwin Emefiele be sacked? This is as a result of the agonising and tortures experience that Nigerians went through during the New Naira redesign and cashless policy.

Compact

The writer’s ability to frame this headline without a system of interrelated lexical, phraseological, and grammatical structure generates language compact. This contributes in achieving the primary purpose of informing instead of entertaining the reader. Due to the language compact, the report ignore stating the reasons behind his suspension. What is more important is the knowledge regarding the status of his job in CBN.

Conciseness

The headline contains words that are highly concise to steer emotions from the readers. In doing so, the writer uses few words and the conciseness of the headline achieves maximum effects. Just six words have been used to render Emefiele out of job; a position he enjoyed right from President Goodluck Jonathan’s administration through to President Muhammadu Buhari’s.

TEXT 6 “Tinubu, ex-Gov Yari in fresh tussle over 10th Senate Presidency” (*Daily Post*, June 09, 2023)



Simplicity

This Text contains simple words used here instead of complex and idiomatic expressions. This is a smart journalistic reportage intended to conceal any form of animosity in the battle between the politicians. The writer also uses shortened-word forms as a stylistic feature of newspaper headlines containing nouns modifying nouns is seen here where “10th Senate” modifies another noun “Presidency”.

Compact

Though the language is very compacted, the writer is able to help the reader differentiate between facts and opinions instead of forcing opinions on the reader.

Conciseness

The language is straight forward, concise and devoid of unnecessary modifiers that makes a sentence clumsy.

This is a noticeable important stylistic feature in the headline. Again, the writer avoided the use of asyndeton – that is omission of conjunctions that ordinarily would have joined the nouns “Tinubu” and ex-Governor Yari”. Though deliberately omitted, it is interpreted from the context without distorting the meaning of the headline.

TEXT 7 “Kano police arrest 57 for looting” (*Daily Post*, June 09, 2023)



Directness

This news headline is written in a plain, direct language. The style is devoid of round about expressions or phrase verbs, collocations or idiomatic expressions. It obvious fact about the headline is that it contains a clear, succinct and intriguing message capable of kindling a spark of interest in the reader. Even the average person who is in a big hurry can still glance his eyes swiftly through the headline and read it.

Imagery

Here, the writer uses imagery as a feature of style in journalism as the picture of a policeman strapping his rifle is used to tell the story. The journalist has used this image to expatiate his point that the looters are arrested by the Nigerian police.

Data 8 “Gunmen murder Imo ex-speaker’s police orderly, dumb body inside bush” (*Daily Post*, June 9, 2023)



Compact

This text reveals the writer’s consciousness of the stylistic feature of apostrophe application as seen in the headline. This has helped to achieve compact and grammatical correctness. The noun speaker is apostrophised as “speaker’s police orderly” to show ownership, it conveys the role the orderly plays to the speaker whom, before his gruesome murder, he served. The use of the contracted form “ex-” instead of ‘former’ speaker is deliberately done to achieve compact.

Simplicity

The writer has used simple words that directly expressed the action performed by the verbs in the headline. Much information is revealed in this text such that the reader knows who murdered who and where the body is dumped. This feature of stylistic journalistic reportage pushes the message home even to the less educated minds.

Directness

Due to the directness of the headline, the reporter uses grammatical feature where a noun modifies another noun. Here: the noun “gun” modifies the noun “men”. Instead saying ‘a group of people holding guns have murdered the orderly of the former speaker of Imo State house of assembly’, the reporter uses direct language “Gunmen murder Imo ex-speaker’s police orderly, dumb body inside bush”.

Imagery

As can be observed from the caption, the writer uses a picture of four persons brandishing den guns in the air, hence the headline tags them as “gunmen”. The image of the guns also help in creating a mental picture of the story in the readers. Even by merely seeing the image of the rifles and ammunitions, one is gripped by fear and understands what can be done with guns especially if held by undesirable elements.

Data 9 “Gov Buni reacts as fire guts Damaturu market” (*Daily Post*, June 9, 2023)



Pauperism

This headline contains a stylistic journalistic feature known as pauperism, in that it is hastily written and thus very imprecise. It is not clear as to what the Governor’s reaction was when he is informed that fire gut Damaturu market.

The reader is left to question in his mind what his reaction is. Whether his reaction was ‘ordering the immediate renovation of the market’, ‘donating relief materials to the victims’, constituting a committee to promptly investigate the cause of the fire’, or to ‘set up an independent enquiry to investigate and punish those responsible for the fire’, it is up to the reader of the headline to read the full story or ponder along these lines.

Imagery

It can be seen that the reporter has attached to the headline the picture of the Executive Governor of Yobe State His Excellency Mai Mala Buni CON. The reader understands that the major thrust of the headline is on Governor Mai Mala Buni's reaction and not on the destruction of the market by the fire. This explains why the reporter has used his picture instead of the picture of the market burning with smoke billowing into the skies.

Compact

To achieve compact for maximum effects, this headline also contains the use of shortened morphological framing of morpheme deletions as the word 'Governor' is written as "Gov". The writer uses simple present tense forms in the headline such as "reacts" and "guts". Though the language used in newspaper headlines most times violates the norms of writing in relation to grammar and structure, this headline syntactically and semantically makes a complete sentence.

Conciseness

The message enshrined in the headline is concise.

Data 10 (taken from *Sunday Vanguard Newspaper*, June 10, 2023)



This headline, very direct in specifically spelling out what the president must do to achieve his intended reforms.

Simplicity

The report captures this headline with simple words to ensure simplicity which is a unique feature of journalistic reportage.

Conciseness

The headline is very concise and capable of steering the president into radical action. He is made to understand what must be done to actualize the dream of nipping oil thievery in Nigeria.

Directness

The journalistic reportage of this headline is so direct that one is almost frozen with fear. The president is directly informed about the long-existing cabal feasting on Nigeria oil and gas industry. He must be willing to engage in direct confrontation with them, and, in so doing, fight them to win the war against oil thieves.

Imagery

The reader can see the image of the president, gazing into the space in the manner of an attentive listener. He is flanked by his orderly, who, looking serious and observant, stands as the president's protective attaché.

Data 11 (taken from *Sunday Vanguard Newspaper*, June 10, 2023)



Compact

This news headline begins with a rhetorical question, designed not necessarily to initiate intense political debate but rather, to compel the reader into self-retrospection in relation president Bola Ahmed Tinubu's tenure as the Executive Governor of Lagos State. It is also meant to instigate Tinubu to search his mind too. The compact, however, is achieved through the rhetorical question which presupposes that the president has a strong influence on what happens in Lagos.

Imagery

The headline contains an image of president Tinubu sitting before a microphone, as of someone about to deliver a speech before a live audience. It also captures him to be in deep thoughts. The use of this image aligns with the unique feature journalistic reportage in newspaper headlines. It also makes the viewers and readers see the subject of the headline.

Conciseness

The headline is concise and completely devoid of unnecessary details, flowery language, idiomatic expressions that could shield the reporter's intended meaning. This feature also helps in creating simplicity in the headline. The overall idea is to make the headline achieve its intended purpose, which is for it to be clearly understood.

Data 12 (taken from *Sunday Vanguard Newspaper*, June 10, 2023)



This headline shows how Nigeria army glorifies itself every time they have an edge over bandits, boko haram or terrorist during clashes. This, is shown through the use of such strong verbs as "neutralize", "crush", "demolish", "extinguish", the use of imagery in this headline, as the picture reveals, shows Nigerian army personnel in uniform, moving gallantly, taking long strides, bold and ceremoniously.

Compact

The news headline is very compacted to achieve brevity and precision. This is an important feature of journalistic reportage intended to grip the readers' attention instead of repelling them with

boring details. However, the headline still retains critically vital information.

Imagery

The headline is followed with a picture of Nigerian armed forces personnel in uniform, wilding guns, wearing helmet and bullet proof jackets strapped around them. This helps to instil realism and believability in the mind of the reader. The image also confirms the professionalism of the Nigerian army as they walk in lock-steps and defined lines as of a choreographed activity parade. This is a reflection of prolonged training and unified combat operations.

Uses of Cartoons

Cartoons are highly used in Newspaper journalism to discuss issues and tell stories especially funny stories. The stories are usually funny but highly educative and captivating. The validity of this assertion is explicated in the attached cartoon from *The Guardian Newspaper*.

Data 13 (taken from *Daily Post*, Monday, Vol. 47, No. 19,132. June 03, 2023)



This cartoon stylistically represented two characters who are engrossed in an intense conversation about a very sensitive issue that has bombarded the other’s mind. In a very deep self-retrospection, the Actor asks the Goal why he has changed his views, beliefs, ideologies, and most importantly, his campaign slogan. While staring him in the face, eyeball to eyeball, he asks him: “FOUR YEARS AGO, WHEN HIS EXCELLENCY WAS CAMPAIGNING FOR RE-ELECTION, ONE OF HIS SLOGANS WAS “YES, WE CAN!”” While the Goal does not deny this; he is quick to remind the Actor how things have changed thus: “EXACTLY, WELL, THINGS HAVE CHANGED... FUEL SCARCITY EVERYWHERE”. The Goal then asks him why so, and the response he gets is “WE’RE NO LONGER SHOUTING “WE CAN!”” ... WE’RE NOW SHOUTING “JERRYCAN!”” As a matter stylistic emphasis, the word “can” is emboldened. The cartoonist, through the Goal, deliberately makes fun out of the serious dialogue to the greatest chagrin of the Actor. This stylistic feature immediately brings to mind the horrendously pitiable scramble for fuel as a litre of fuel now goes for N550 or N900 in over-exploitative sellers. The situation is so bad that even car owners now walk long distances when they would have used their cars were the cost of fuel not too high. People are now more concerned with surviving than indulging in certain luxury.

Data 14 (taken from *The Guardian*, Sunday, Vol. 39, No. 17,114. May 21, 2022)

This cartoon captures two participants where one, wilding a gun, aims to shoot at the second participant. The Actor, who is in uniform, thrusts his gun towards the goal while shouting: “HANDS UP!

COME DOWN, YOU’RE UNDER ARREST!” In a spare of a moment, the Goal became frozen with fear, shouting: “PLEASE DON’T SHOOT, OFFICER... NA OKADA I DEY RIDE, NO BE COW!” This is extremely humorous the correlation between a cow and a motorcycle. However, when pays a close linguistic attention to the analogy, one will understand the stylistic meaning framed in the expression.

The level of love and affection attached to cows seems to supersede that attached to human beings. The protracted clashes between farmers and herders is a case in point, as lives and properties have been destroyed. The cartoonist is here satirizing the Nigerian security personnel who appear to have been bought, compromised, and utterly broken and used against the very people they have been tasked to protect in crisis situations. In many places where they are deployed, they appear to protect the lives of cows above other human beings. This is what propelled and compelled the rider to declare that “PLEASE DON’T SHOOT, OFFICER... NA OKADA I DEY RIDE, NO BE COW!” The writer’s choice of rendering the expressions in upper case letters is his style, which has also extended the seriousness of the message being passed across to the readers. While the Actor uses imperative sentences, the Goal uses polite request, though with emphatic declaration to avoid being shot before his explanations. Through compact, conciseness, and foregrounding, the cartoonist has compressed the information and put into boxes to save space without losing any of its legibility. In so doing, he ensures the interest is focused, captured, and maintained through the use of journalistic stylistic features.

Data 15 (taken from *Sunday Vanguard Newspaper*, VOL. 25 NO. 1510467. May 21, 2023)



Data 12 contains a hilarious but serious cartoon where three participants, both police officers in their official uniform, deliberating. As the lament about the stagnant nature of promotions in the force, one of them wonderingly asks why bankers easily get promoted unlike police officers. One of them tells him: “BANKERS ARE PROMOTED ACCORDING TO THEIR PERFORMANCE! IF YOY MAKE TEN ARMED ROBBERS, TEN HIRED KILLERS, TEN KIDNAPPERS, TEN RAPISTS AND TEN OTHER CRIMINALS UNDER TWO MONTHS, YOUR PROMOTIONS WILL BE RAPID!” The reporter makes mockery of the police force and how their inability to fight crime successfully impede their promotion. Though a cartoon, it harbours deeply disturbing issues and serious review of the failings of the police to properly investigate crimes and comprehend perpetrators and criminals. The implication of the response detailing how police can

get “RAPID PROMOTIONS” is that if police promotion were to be based on these scorecards, many police will remain stagnant. Fighting crime is a delicate and very risky job; and if police officers are not very careful, they will end up losing their lives in the process. We have seen this happen countless times, and in worst case scenario, even their families’ become victims. Through the writer’s distinctive style, the caption is in capital letters, and other key phrases in the text are foregrounded for emphasis apart from making them stick in the reader’s mind’s eye. The foregrounded words and phrases are “...**TO THEIR PERFORMANCE....**” “...**TEN ARMED ROBBERS...**”, “...**TEN RAPISTS...**” “...**TWO MONTHS, YOUR PROMOTIONS... RAPID!**” The cartoonist has also used images as a feature of stylistic journalistic reportage. The pictures of the three police officers used here also affirm this reality.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the features of stylistic journalistic reportage as contained in the three national dailies in Nigeria which are: *The Guardian*, *Daily Post*, and the *Vanguard Newspaper*, where the data for analysis of this research are drawn. The theoretical framework the study has used is Affective Stylistic Theory, and through it, the features of styles found in the papers as used in the headlines are listed, explained, and analysed. As a result of the problems evident in the conceptualisation of stylistics, the researchers have chosen the theory that sums up the varying meanings attached to stylistics and the way in which language varies under the influence of factors such as context, purpose, writer, and period. The pages from which the headlines in the newspapers are drawn are attached and analysed in the body of the paper side by side. This has taken care of the need to photocopy and attached as appendixes the headlines at the end of the paper. This paper concludes that the features of style used by the writers in these national dailies are deliberate as the particular choices made in their use of language created the intended effects on the readers.

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