

## Analyzing the Readability and Grammaticality of Newspapers' Varied Sources and their Impact on Readers

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper investigates the grammaticality and readability of the varied sources of newspapers whether they are printed, on-line news or social media news such as face-book or twitter news and their impact on the readers. To collect data, the researcher designed a questionnaire that measures the grammaticality and readability of the varied sources of newspapers whether they are printed, on line news or social media news such as face-book or twitter news and their impact on the readers. This questionnaire was distributed to on line readers and social media users in November 2015. The researcher could hardly control the number of the participants because Google docs represent the source of data collection. However, 47 online readers responded to the questionnaire. To achieve the objectives of the study and verify its hypotheses, statistical methods such as: charts, frequency distribution of the answers, percentages alpha equation, were used. After analyzing the data the researcher has come up with a result that online readers are more than hard copy readers particularly the readers of face book and twitter successively. More over newspapers manipulating the readers and they do not pay consideration to the grammatical aspects. Accordingly, the researcher recommends that the students should be aware of these things through the orientation of their teachers.*

**Key words:** Media language, manipulative media, readability, Grammaticality

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Media is a huge industry and its main tool is language. This language has to be shaped according to its needs whether to make it more glamorous, more efficient, with the aim of shaping and influencing readers opinions; that is why media language is accused of misleading the readers.

This study will firstly try to understand readers' interaction with various sources of media language whether they are hard copy readers or on-line readers of the varied on-line sources and which source is more favorable to them. Secondly, it tries to investigate the grammaticality of these media sources. Then, it tries to investigate the importance of the headlines in attracting readers attention and eventually, if the headlines match the news story or if the news writers are manipulating the readers with the aim of convincing. In case of manipulations, are the readers aware of the fact that they are fooled of and deceived them to read the whole story or not.

The reason behind this manipulative media according to Noam Chomsky (2001) is that the major media sources are large corporations, owned by and interlinked with even larger conglomerates like other corporations. They, then sell their product to the market. The market plays the role of advertising. Not surprisingly, the picture of the world presented reflects the narrow and biased interests and values of the sellers which eventually victimize buyers; the manipulated readers.

### **2.1. THE POWER OF MEDIA LANGUAGE**

The word 'power' refers to the power of dominant institutions within our society, and how these institutions maintain their dominance through the use of language through media sources such as: newspapers, television... etc. The public institutions of

our society have powers of various sorts. One important power is to control the flow of information: what gets into the press, and how it is presented. The public media is the primary means of shaping public opinion. And if one can shape public opinion, one can change (or strengthen) the power structures that exist. The public media uses the term 'manufacture of consent; if one can convince the people to accept your right to act in specific ways, then you can so act. (Bielsa& O'Donnell, 2008;1)

### **Power Structures = Public Discourse**

These powerful corporations include legally defined bodies such as governments, political parties, companies, etc. For instance, if a political party holds some control over a newspaper or television station, they then can control, to some extent, the content delivered through that newspaper or television station and also, how that content is expressed .(Bielsa& O'Donnell,2008;2)

In some places today, about 3 out of 4 people over the age of 14 read a newspaper daily. While certain developing countries have fewer than 20 copies of a daily newspaper for every 1,000 inhabitants, Norway has more than 600. Altogether, around the globe, about 38,000 newspapers compete for readership. Everywhere, newspapers inform the public of important affairs. But they do more than that. They provide information on which many readers form opinions. "Our daily newspaper reading," shapes our attitudes, our conduct, and even our fundamental moral values."(ibid)

Let's take another example from the relatively transparent case of political discourse. In politics, each opposing party or political force tries to win general acceptance for its own discourse type as the preferred and ultimately the 'natural' one for talking and writing about the state, government, forms of political action, and all aspects of politics. (Fairclough, 1996: 90)

Actually, the Foolish is the person who never reads a newspaper; but the man who believes what he reads is more foolish because it is in the manipulative newspaper. Schlözer; the German historian and journalist of the late 18th century, adds that in one survey, several thousand people in Britain and France were asked how much they trust the 13 institutions. Their answers revealed that the press came in last,. In the United States, most readers still say that they believe their newspaper. But surveys by the Pew Research Center showed that the percentage of believers has declined.

## **2.2. OWNERSHIP DETERMINES MEDIA CONTENT**

Investors don't go down to the television studio and make sure that the local talk-show host or reporter is doing what they want. There are other, subtler, more complex mechanisms that make it fairly certain that the people on the air will do what the owners and investors want. There's a whole, long, filtering process that makes sure that people only rise through the system to become managers, editors, etc., if they've internalized the values of the owners. At that point, they can describe themselves as quite free. So you'll occasionally find some flaming independent-liberal type like Tom Wicker who writes, Look, nobody tells me what to say. I say whatever I want. It's an absolutely free system. And, for *him*, that's true. After he'd demonstrated to the satisfaction of his bosses that he'd internalized their values, he was entirely free to write whatever he wanted. In other words in some far-reaching sense it does, because if content ever goes beyond the bounds owners will tolerate, they'll surely move in to limit it. But there's a fair amount of flexibility.(Chomsky,1994:1).

## **2.3. MEDIA AND GRAMMATICALITY**

Mass media has penetrated so deeply in our lives and each one of us is addicted to certain type of media which finally becomes

the main source of information to him. Media language is a special kind of language. It is shaped according to the demands of users in social media, and to journalists, editors, Owners in newspaper and television channels and networks. Over the pass of time, this had a remarkable impact on the English language and its grammar.

Many previous studies revealed that media language doesn't pay attention to the grammatical rules, in other words, they are less structured in terms of syntax. The articles, prepositions are neglected, particularly in the headlines. In terms of tenses, the present simple tense whether it conventional or historic to express the past event is frequently used, followed with the future and the past tense successively.

### **3.1. METHODS**

#### **3.1- Data Collection**

Since this study is conducted to measure the grammaticality and readability of the varied media sources and their impact on the readers, a questionnaire was used as a tool of data collection from on-line readers.

#### **4.1 STATISTICAL TOOLS**

To achieve the objectives of the study and to verify hypotheses, statistical tools were used such as:

- 1 - charts.
- 2 - frequency distribution of the responses.
- 3 - percentages.
- 4 - Alpha equations.

#### **4.2 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY:**

Reliability is defined as the extent to which a questionnaire gives the same results on repeated trials, whereas Validity is defined as the extent to which the instrument measures what it

supposed However, this can be tested through the use of the square root of the reliability coefficient

$$\text{Validity} = \sqrt{\text{Reliability}}$$

**Reliability and Validity Table:**

The Questionnaire	
reliability coefficient	validity coefficient
0.53	0.72

According to the above table, reliability and validity coefficient for the questionnaire is greater than (50%) and close to the number, one, This indicates that the questionnaire is characterized by high reliability and validity and expected to give valid and reliable results.

**5.1 RESULTS:**

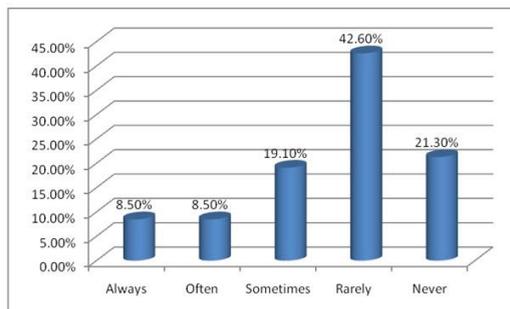
**Research Question1:** What kind of newspaper do you read?

- I read printed newspaper?

**Table (1): The printed newspaper readers**

	Frequency	Percentage
Always	4	8.5 %
Often	4	8.5 %
Sometimes	9	19.1 %
Rarely	20	42.6 %
Never	10	21.3 %
Total	47	100 %

**Figure (1)**



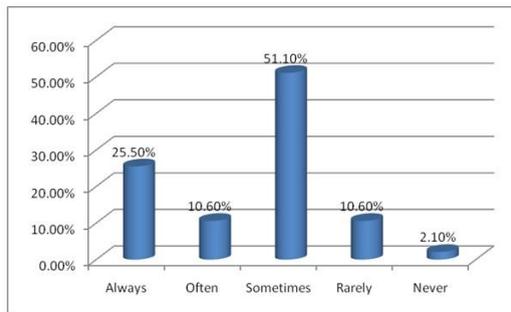
According to the above table and figure, we observe that most of the readers rarely read printed newspapers as the number of the respondents of this option represents the highest responses: 20 respondents with percentage 42.60.

- I read online newspaper?

**Table (2): On-line Readers**

	Frequency	Percentage
Always	12	25.5%
Often	5	10.6%
Sometimes	24	51.1%
Rarely	5	10.6%
Never	1	2.1%
Total	47	100%

**Figure (2)**



According to the above table and figure, we observe that most of the readers sometimes read on-line newspapers as the number of the respondents of this option represents the highest responses: 24 respondents with percentage 51.10.

This indicates that the number of on-line readers is more than the number of printed newspapers readers.

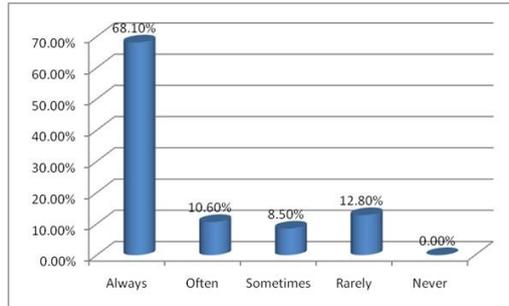
- I read Facebook newspaper?

**Table (3): Facebook Readers**

	Frequency	Percentage
Always	32	68.1 %
Often	5	10.6 %
Sometimes	4	8.5 %

Rarely	6	12.8 %
Never	0	0.0 %
Total	47	100 %

**Figure (3)**



According to the above table and figure, we observe that most of the readers always read face book newspapers as the number of the respondents of this option represents the highest responses: 32 respondents with percentage 68.10.

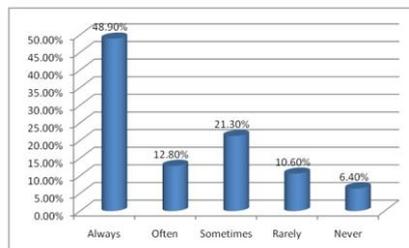
This indicates that Facebook readers represent the majority of the readers.

- I read news on twitter?

**Table (4): Twitter Readers**

	Frequency	Percentage
Always	23	48.9 %
Often	6	12.8 %
Sometimes	10	21.3 %
Rarely	5	10.6 %
Never	3	6.4 %
Total	47	100 %

**Figure (4)**



According to the above table and figure, we observe that most of the readers always read twitter newspapers as the number of the respondents of this option represents the highest responses: 23 respondents with percentage 48.9.

This indicates that twitter readers immediately come after face book readers.

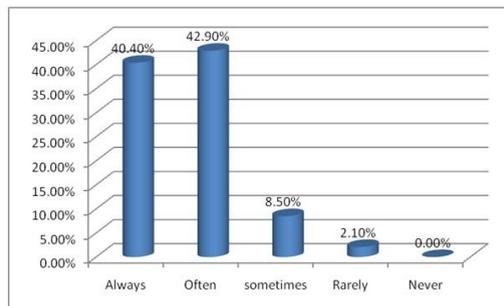
**Research Question (2):** What part of newspaper you read most?

- I just read the headlines.

**Table (5)**

	Frequency	Percentage
Always	19	40.4 %
Often	23	48.9 %
Sometimes	4	8.6 %
Rarely	1	2.1 %
Never	0	0.0 %
Total	47	100 %

**Figure (5)**



According to the above table and figure, we observe that most of the readers often read the title of the newspapers as the number of the respondents of this option represents the highest responses: 23 respondents with percentage 42.9.

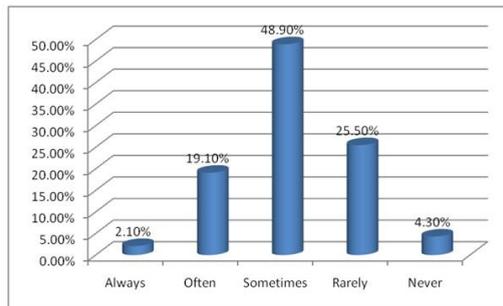
This indicates that the readers frequently read the titles only.

- I read the headliners and the news stories?

**Table (6)**

	Frequency	Percentage
Always	1	2.1 %
Often	9	19.1 %
Sometimes	23	48.9 %
Rarely	12	25.5 %
Never	2	4.3%
Total	47	100 %

**Figure (6)**



According to the above table and figure, we observe that most of the readers sometimes read the title of the newspapers and the news stories as the number of the respondents of this option represents the highest responses: 23 respondents with percentage 48.9.

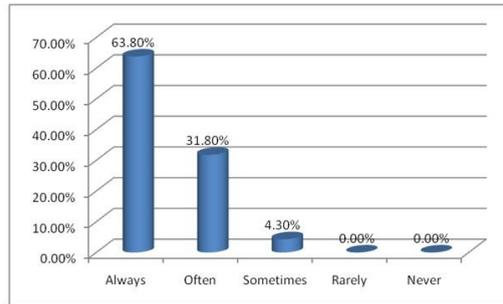
This indicates that the number of readers of the headlines and the news stories is less frequent than the readers of the headlines only.

- I read the news stories if I am impressed by its title

**Table (7)**

	Frequency	Percentage
Always	30	63.8 %
Often	15	31.8 %
Sometimes	2	4.3 %
Rarely	0	0.0 %
Never	0	0.0 %
Total	47	100 %

**Figure (7)**



According to the above table and figure, we observe that most of the readers always read the title of the newspapers if they are impressed by the news stories as the number of the respondents of this option represents the highest responses: 30 respondents with percentage 63.8.

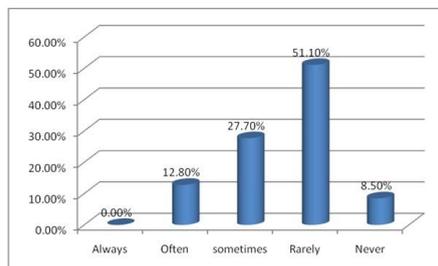
This indicates that the number of readers of the headlines who are impressed by the news stories is the most frequent.

- As for the manipulative impact, News headlines match the news stories behind them?

**Table (8): The manipulative Impact of the Newspapers Headlines**

	Frequency	Percentage
Always	0	0.0 %
Often	6	12.8 %
Sometimes	13	27.7 %
Rarely	24	51.1 %
Never	4	8.5 %
Total	47	100 %

**Figure (8)**



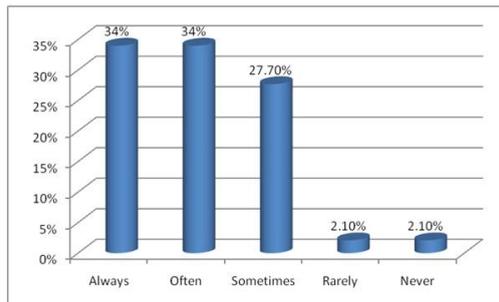
According to the above table and figure, we observe that most of the readers agree that newspapers headlines don not match the news stories behind them as the highest number of respondents reveal that: zero for always and 51 % for rarely. Therefore, the titles have negative manipulative impact on the readers as they attract and force them to read hollow news.

- Headlines break grammatical rules?

**Table (9): How News headlines break the Grammatical Rules**

	Frequency	Percentage
Always	16	34.0 %
Often	16	34.0 %
Sometimes	13	27.7 %
Rarely	1	2.1 %
Never	1	2.1 %
Total	47	100.0 %

**Figure 9**



According to the above table and figure, we observe that most of the readers agree that newspapers headlines break the grammatical rules as the number of the respondents in the rows: "always and often" are 16, 16 with percentage 34% and 34% successively.

## **6. DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS:**

As time goes by, the interest in printed newspaper is becoming lower and lower every day. If someone is having an access to the internet he prefers online newspapers to the printed ones.

Twitter on the other hand is becoming more popular every day, but according to the questionnaire results, twitter is number two after Facebook.

In terms of readability, the majority of the readers read the titles only, but if they are impressed by the titles, the majority of the readers read both the titles and the news stories.

*However, the impressed readers by the attractive titles get frustrated after they move on to the hollow news stories.*

*As for grammaticality, the questionnaire results reveal that most of the newspapers break the grammatical rules and hence they are regarded having their own style.*

## **7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **7.1 Conclusions**

Firstly, online readers are more than printed paper readers, particularly, Facebook and Twitter readers successively. Media is becoming unreliable every day as it manipulates us and accordingly it negatively influences us. The researcher doesn't want to harm the entrusted media sources, but the statistical analysis of the questionnaire revealed that there are some newspapers that manipulate the readers. Headlines are narrative hooks which drag the readers into the story, using the decorated language and sometimes exaggerated one.

Media controlling our life, it shapes what we read, hear and watch, it is affecting our life now days more than ever because of the wide spread of social media and online newspapers.

The researcher also concluded, as the statistical results reveal, that newspapers do not consider the grammatical aspects.

## **7. 2 Recommendations:**

### **7. 2 .1 Recommendations for the Readers**

1. Readers must be aware of all the tricks that journalists use to hook them.
2. Readers should get more insight about the term manipulative media to raise their awareness and avoid being deceived.

### **7. 2. 2 Recommendations for the Teachers**

1. Teachers should teach their learners the grammatical aspects of media in comparison with the standardized grammar.
2. They should also teach them how the title components reflect the content.

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