

## **An Exploration of Creativity in Selected News Report in the Punch Newspapers**

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### **Abstract**

Creativity is an integral part of writing which enables writers to craft unique ideas, perspectives, and narratives that engage and captivate readers. The lack of creativity or the abundant use of creativity in any text can either hinder or enhance understanding of the text. Therefore, this study is on how creativity is used in news reporting to disambiguate information. Using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) perspectives of cohesion as expanded by Idowu (2016), this study explicated the various lexical tools like reiteration/ repetition, synonym, antonym, collocation, and grammatical tools such as reference, conjunction and substitution as journalistic tools for creativity and clarity. The study employed the mixed methods which involved both a textual analysis for the content and quantitative analysis for the percentile findings. The findings revealed that the reporter made use of grammatical features like reference having eight occurrences (40%), closely followed by conjunction with seven occurrences (35%), substitution with 5 occurrences (25%) to lead the readers aright and show clarity of the speaker's thought. However, there was no occurrence of ellipsis. The reporter also made use of lexical tools of repetition, synonym, antonym and collocation having 46%, 40%, 07% and 07% respectively to emphasize the speaker's points and avoid misinterpretations. The study concluded that the cohesion tools used in this text enhanced the creativity skill of the selected reporter and helped to disambiguate information by simplifying complex lexical items which might lead to misinterpretation of the text. It also encourages the public to stay informed about accurate and updated information so as to help them make proper economic decision. The study recommended that reporters should be innovative by integrating items that will aid creativity and enhance the overall understanding of any text.

**Keywords:** Cohesion, Creativity, Journalism, Language, News reporting, Punch Newspapers,

## **1. Introduction**

Creativity is considered very important to achieving success in any field of life. Given the central role of creativity in the future post-information society, a call for a pragmatist approach to the study of creativity is advocated (Corraza, 2016). Creativity in news reporting in particular is paramount so as to keep the audience's attention and help in simplifying complex news stories, making them more accessible and understandable to the general public. Creative writing is a wide umbrella under which an endless number of ideas can be expressed. There has been an agitation of the creation of creative writing in primary schools (Okpala and Alaku, 2024) which would help any writer that passes through this level of education to developing the act of creative thinking. Oni & Soji-Oni (2021) assert that creativity is all about bringing together different ideas and transforming them to make something new, unique and personal. Every individual has an innate ability that can be guided to fruition.

Creativity in news reporting is a vital aspect of journalism that goes beyond the traditional notion of simply relaying facts and events. According to Witschge (2019), creativity involves the application of imaginative and innovative approaches to tell stories, engage audiences, and provide deeper insights into current events. News is very key in the society as it provides information, fostering transparency, and facilitating public discourse. The News serves as a cornerstone of an informed and democratic society, helping citizens navigate a complex world and engage in meaningful discussions. The news covers a wide range of topics that can help identify emerging trends in the society; politics, economics and culture. In today's fast-paced and digitally connected world, the demand for news and information is constant. To stand out in this competitive landscape, journalists and news organizations need to infuse

creativity into their reporting. Creativity in news reporting means finding fresh and compelling ways to present stories, adding depth, context, and understanding to the facts (Lopez, 2022). Creativity in news reporting is a dynamic and evolving aspect of journalism that has to be carefully used. It empowers journalists to break through the noise, engage readers, and provide a deeper understanding of the world's events. It is necessary in producing high-quality journalism when is rightly used.

Leventhal (2022) believes that:

Writing a news report may be the toughest challenge for any creative writer to undertake. You cannot bend the facts, usually you were assigned to cover the story whether you like the topic or have experience writing about that topic or not, still, you are expected to write enthusiastically about a subject that may personally bore you to tears.  
(5)

Leventhal further posits that news reporting for print, broadcast or online media can be quite problematic and challenging. The key to writing a great news report is to make the reader feel like s/he is standing right there as it is happening. If you are reporting on a political speech, we want to feel as if we are standing right in the midst of the crowd and it takes creativity to achieve this (Leventhal, 2022).

The language of the media has been studied from several sociolinguistic, pragmatic and discourse analytical perspectives to explicate how language operates within media contexts and influences audience perceptions and societal dynamics. (Leventhal, 2022; Witschge, 2019; Lopez, 2022; Corazza, 2016). However, the focus of this study is quite different from the existing studies, as the aim is to examine how the media make use of creativity to disambiguate information and disseminate accurate and updated information to the public

which is to educate and help them to take proper decision about health, politics, and education. Language, the main tool needs to be investigated as it has been found that the Nigerian media often cause conflicts through their reports (Kangiwa and Koko, 2021).

Therefore, this paper investigates the creativity in news reporting by focusing on a news report in Punch newspaper on ‘Subsidy Removal, Challenge Nigeria must Experience by Soludo. The extent to which the creativity (if any) embedded in the report stands out to capturing the attention of their audience and how this creativity (if any) contributes to clarity or ambiguity of information are the concerns of this paper.

This study aims to investigate the creativity in news reporting while the specific objectives are to:

1. identify and analyze the manifestations of lexico-grammatical cohesion in the selected news report as they reflect creativity.
2. examine the functional role of each of the manifestations within the contexts of the selected text as they relate to creativity.
3. examine how the identified manifestations of cohesion disambiguate information in the selected text.

## **2. Theoretical Considerations**

The research is carried out within the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics but specifically discourse analysis. Discourse analysis concentrates on how language is used to create meaning that is the use of language beyond the sentence. Osisanwo

(2003) defines discourse analysis as the analysis of discourse that is necessary for the analysis of language in use. On the other hand, Cohesion is a framework under discourse analysis that focuses on the way a text comes together as a meaningful unit. It is a relation of meaning that exists within a text. Osisanwo (2003) asserts that cohesion is the linguistic means by which a text functions as a single unit. In the same vein, Idowu (2016) posits that cohesion is a linguistic process through which sentences are connected to make a text. She further explains that cohesion is a useful tool for interpreting a discourse and, a means of creating texts. In other words, cohesion is a linguistic tool used in analyzing texts.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) made a detailed classification of the cohesive devices in English; these cohesive devices were expanded by Idowu (2016). These authors identified two major types of cohesive relations namely grammatical and lexical cohesion. According to Idowu (2016), these two major forms of cohesive relations cannot be separated rigidly as different types because many instances of these forms of cohesion overlap. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion as the major characteristic of coherence covering linguistic properties of the language, gives a sequence of sentences unity. It is the property of unity in a written text or a segment of spoken discourse that stems from links among its surface elements, as when words in one sentence are repeated in another, and especially from the fact that some words or phrases interpretation depend upon material in preceding or following text indicated by explicit syntactic ties between linguistic elements. Idowu (2016) recognized the following cohesive features: Reference, substitution, Ellipsis, Conjunction (grammatical) and collocation, repetition, synonym, hyponym, polysemy, metonymy and antonym (lexical). These two perspectives of cohesion are fully explored in this study.

### **3. Conceptual Clarification**

#### **3.1 The Concept of Creativity**

Creativity is the use of imagination or original ideas to create something (Okpala and Alaku, 2024). Creativity brings about something new. It is a phenomenon whereby something new and valuable is formed. Runco & Jaeger (2012) opine that ‘Creativity requires both originality and effectiveness’. They further explain that originality is often labeled novelty, if something is not unusual, novel, or unique, it is commonplace, mundane or conventional. If it is not original, then not creative. They say again that originality is not alone sufficient for creativity. Original things must be effective to be creative. Like originality, effectiveness takes various forms. It may take the form of (and be labeled as) usefulness, fit, or appropriateness. ‘Originality is vital, but must be balanced with fit and appropriateness’ (Runco, 1988). Hence, creativity requires originality and usefulness. Franken (2021) affirms that ‘Creativity is the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others.

Creativity is any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain or that transforms an existing into a new one. According to Franken (2021), a creative person has novel idea. The degree of novelty of which the person is capable or which he habitually exhibits can be tested in terms of the frequency of uncommon, yet acceptable, responses to items. Creativity is the expression of the individual's characteristics of personality and imagination via art, writing, and other means. Camberos (2010) defines creativity as the ability of a person to create, perform, or think of something in a way that has not been done before.

### **3.2 The Concept of News reporting**

The term news comes from the word new, written in old English either as newes or niwes, but in modern day as an acronym for the four sides of the world-north, east, west and south (Palczewski, 2018). News is information on current events which may be presented through different media such as printing, postal, on television etc. It refers to newly received or noteworthy information about recent events. News is information we are unaware of until we read or see it in the media (Frost, 2010). Palczewski (2018) posits that news covers a wide range of topics like politics, sports, food and health. On the other hand, Frost (2010) defines reporting as an act of gathering, verifying, and presenting information about events and issues. Reporting can be done through various mediums, such as, newspapers, on television, radio and online articles. Ogbonna (2022) affirms that news reporting is a subset of reporting specifically focused on the gathering and dissemination of news. It involves the process of collecting, analyzing, and presenting news stories to the public through various forms of media such as newspapers, broadcast news, online news, websites, and social media. News reporting aims to provide accurate, timely, and relevant information to the public about the current issues and events.

### **3.3 Creativity and Innovation**

Creativity and innovation go hand in hand; it is creativity that leads to innovation. This is supported by Csikszentmihalyi (2001), Innovation has become a requirement for human existence. Oni (2020) explains that ‘More creative individuals can better take advantage of opportunities and adapt more effectively to challenges and difficulties in their personal and professional lives’. He further asserts that ‘students who demonstrate creativity in assessment

tasks are frequently awarded grades superior to their peers to reward this act or the expression of thinking'. For something to be creative, it must be novel, have value, or be appropriate to the cognitive demands of the situation.

Creativity is regarded as a key building block for innovation. Creativity entails a level of originality and novelty that is essential for innovation. Although creativity is a fundamental part of innovation, it is not accurate to interchange the terms. Innovation encourages the further processing of the output of the creative process (the idea) to allow the exploitation of its potential value through development. Creativity and innovation are relatives. If you want innovation to occur, creativity best be on the menu (Franken, 2021).

#### **4. Data and Method**

The data for this study was purposively chosen- news report on subsidy removal. The premise for the selection was to investigate how language is used in news reporting, most importantly to examine the creativity embedded in the text as it affects ambiguity. Furthermore, the data chosen was also informed by the need to analyze the current trend in Nigeria which is 'subsidy removal'. This study is restricted to a Punch newspaper report by Deborah Tolu-Kolawole on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August, 2023. The title of the news report is 'Subsidy Removal, Challenge Nigeria must Experience". This was the disclosure made by Soludo during the commissioning of the Solution Innovation District in Awka, Anambra state capital. It consists of 415 words, 2,538 characters, 10 paragraphs and 37 lines. The selected text was downloaded from the internet and analyzed to show the lexico-grammatical manifestations in the news report. The study adopted the mixed method; the qualitative method accounted for the content and the textual analyses, while the quantitative method was used for the percentile



findings. For easy identification, each lexico-grammatical cohesion item bears a code: Repetition-LR; Collocation-LC; Antonym-LA; Synonym -LS; Hyponym-LH; Substitution -GS; Ellipsis- GE; Reference- GR; and Conjunction-GC.

## 5. Results

Subsidy removal, challenge Nigeria must experience -Soludo

The underlined words reveal the use of anaphoric Reference (GR); ‘challenge’ for ‘subsidy removal’.

The Governor of Anambra State, Chukwuma Soludo, has said the removal of subsidy on Premium Motor Spirit popularly known as petrol, and the current floating of the naira are some of the disruptive changes Nigeria must undergo before it will emerge “victorious”. The former governor of Nigeria’s apex bank also stressed the need for the country to embrace its greatest resource which he said is “human capital”.

Four lexico-grammatical cohesion manifestations are identified in the underlined words. There is the use of anaphoric Reference (SR) for ‘Chukwuma Soludo’ and cataphoric Reference ‘he’ for the ‘Governor of Anambra State, also in the use of pronominal item ‘it’ for ‘Nigeria’. There is also the Repetition (LR) of ‘country’, ‘Nigeria’. There is also the use of Synonym (LS) of ‘country’ and ‘Nigeria’; ‘said’ and ‘stressed’. There is also the use of Conjunctions (GC) ‘and’ & ‘before’.

The governor noted that the country must focus on the future while jettisoning the “old order”. He also stressed the need for a thorough embrace of technology which according to him will provide more opportunities for youths in society.

The underlined words show four lexico-grammatical cohesion manifestations. There is the

use of Conjunction (GC) ‘while’ & ‘which’. There is also the use of Reference (GR), ‘he’ & ‘him’ are anaphoric references to ‘the governor’. ‘Future’ & ‘old order’ are used as Antonyms (LA) while ‘noted’ and stressed’ are used as Synonyms (LS).

According to a statement made available to our correspondent in Abuja on Thursday, Soludo disclosed this during the commissioning of the Solution Innovation District in Awka, the state capital. He said, “The world may be going east or west, but Nigeria must go through necessary disruptive changes. The removal of subsidies and the floating of exchange rates are just some of these changes. It is quite auspicious that we are opening this district at this critical time.

The underlined words reveal five lexico-grammatical cohesion features. ‘The disclosure’ is a Substitute (GS) for Soludo’s statement in the preceding sentence- ‘According to a statement...’ and ‘this’, a substitute for ‘Solution Innovation’. ‘The state capital’ is an anaphoric Reference (GR) to ‘Awka’; ‘he’ is also an anaphoric reference to ‘Soludo’. ‘East’ & ‘west’ are also Antonyms (LA). There is Repetition (LR) of the lexical cohesion ‘changes’ & ‘this’. The use of Conjunction (GC) is reflected in the words ‘and; & ‘but’.

Our greatest resource is our human capital, and we want to mine it to its infinite elasticity. Only those who can see tomorrow. Only those who plan and work towards it can control the future. I ask our youths to look up to opportunities in these ongoing disruptive changes.

There are four lexico-grammatical cohesion manifestations in the underlined words. ‘Disruptive changes’ (also in the 4<sup>th</sup> analysis) ‘human capital’ (also in the 2<sup>nd</sup> analysis), ‘youths’ & ‘opportunities’ (also in the 3<sup>rd</sup> analysis), ‘only those who’ are lexical items that are repeated (LR). ‘Our’ & ‘we’ are anaphoric Reference (GR) manifestations to ‘Nigerians’ & ‘these’(in the 4<sup>th</sup> analysis) is a cataphoric reference to ‘disruptive changes’. ‘Tomorrow’ and

‘future are Synonyms (LS) used here. The use of Conjunction (GC) is reflected in the word ‘and’,

In a digital age, human capital appreciates with continuous usage. We must keep on innovating and acquiring multiple scalable skills to control the future. We want the youths and children of Ndi Anambra to be prepared for this future- invention, innovation, and technology, ”Governor Soludo said. Speaking further, Soludo noted that the state would empower youths in the state to ensure that they control the future and become world champions.

There are six lexico-grammatical cohesion manifestations in the underlined words. ‘Human capital’, ‘future’, ‘Soludo’ ‘youths’, & ‘state’ are manifestations of Repetition (LR). There is also the manifestation of Synonyms (LS)-‘youths’ & ‘children’ ‘noted’ & ‘said’. ‘We’ is a substitute (GS) for ‘Nigerians’. ‘Invention’, ‘innovation’ & ‘technology’ are manifestations of Collocation (LC). ‘They’ & ‘world champions’ are anaphoric References (SR) to ‘youths’. ‘And’ & ‘with’ are manifestations of Conjunction (GC).

We must focus on tomorrow. The old order is gone, so let’s not cry to bring it back. We are empowering and training our youths to control the future and become champions of the world”.

There are five lexico- grammatical cohesion manifestations in the underlined words. ‘We’ is a substitute (GS) for ‘Nigerians. ‘Tomorrow & ‘future’; ‘empowering’ & ‘training’ are the manifestations of Synonyms (LS). ‘Old order’ is repeated (LR) in analysis 3, ‘it’ is an anaphoric reference (GR) to the ‘old order; ‘champions; is also an anaphoric reference to ‘youths’. ‘And’ is a manifestation of Conjunction (GC).

“Technology is our mantra. We want to get technology to become our culture. Everything is technology and technology is everywhere. The criminals that cause a nuisance in our society cannot define us. They are

completely insignificant,” the Governor stressed.

Five lexico-grammatical cohesion manifestations are identified in the underlined words. ‘Mantra’ is an anaphoric reference (GR) to ‘technology’, ‘our’ is also an anaphoric reference to ‘we’, ‘us’ & ‘they’ are references to ‘criminals’. ‘Technology’ ‘our’ & ‘is’ are manifestations of repetition (LR). There is also the manifestation of synonyms (LS) - ‘everything’ & ‘everywhere’. ‘Culture’ is a substitute (GS) for ‘technology’ & ‘nuisance’ is a substitute for ‘criminals. The use of conjunction (GC) is reflected in the word ‘and’.

Earlier, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Innovation and Business Incubation, Chinwe Okoli thanked the Governor for his commitment to actualizing the vision which she explained is quite timely.

Four lexico-grammatical cohesion features are identified in the underlined words. ‘Governor’ & ‘the’ are manifestations of ‘Repetition (LR). ‘Chinwe Okoli’ is an anaphoric reference (GR) to ‘the Special Adviser’ & ‘his’ is also an anaphoric reference to ‘the Governor’. The use of conjunction (GC) is reflected in the word ‘and’. ‘The vision’ is a substitute (GS) for Soludo’s statement.

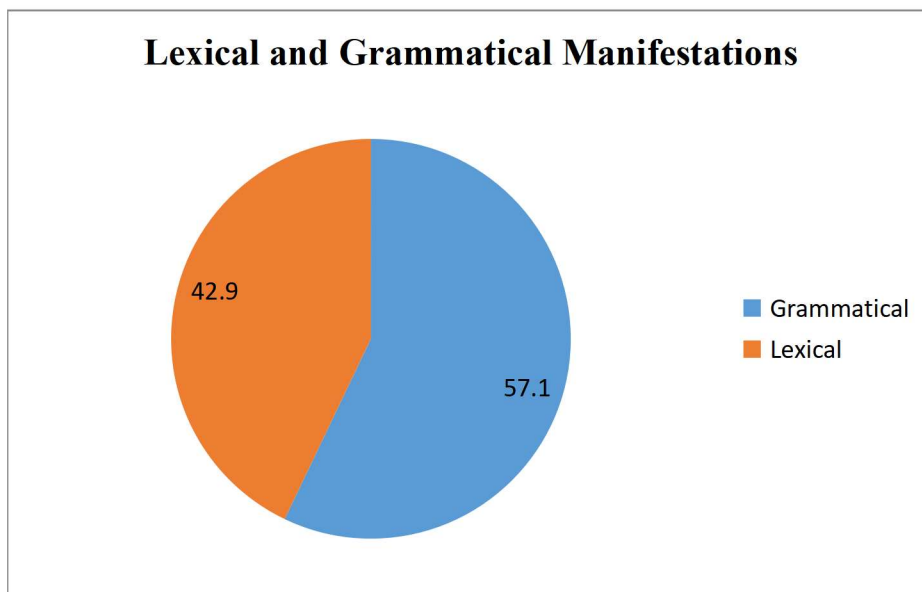
**Table 1: Summary of the Lexical and Grammatical Analyses**

Grammatical Manifestations	Number of Occurrences	Percentages of Occurrences	Lexical Manifestations	Number of Occurrences	Percentage of Occurrences
References (GR)	8/20	40	Repetition(LR)	7/15	46
Conjunction (GC)	7/20	35	Synonyms (LS)	6/15	40
Substitution	5/20	25	Antonyms (LA)	1/15	7

(GS)					
			Collocation (LC)	1/15	7
Total	20	100		15	100

**Table 2: The Overall Percentage of the Lexical and Grammatical Manifestations**

Cohesion	Total	Total in Percentage	%
Grammatical	20	20/35	57.1
Lexical	14	15/35	42.9
Total	34		100



**Figure 1: A Pie Chart showing the Overall Percentage of the Lexico-Grammatical Manifestations**

## 6. Discussion

From Table 1, under the grammatical cohesion, the use of Reference (SR) has the most

occurrences of eight (8) times with 40%. The reporter likely made use of this device to refer to the speaker's statement for credibility and provided valuable support and context for the information presented to lead the readers aright and show clarity of the speaker's thought. Closely following GR is Conjunction (GC) which has seven (7) occurrences with 35% to show that the report connects smoothly, thereby enhancing its overall impact of clarity and creativity. The third position is occupied by Substitution (GS) with five (5) occurrences with 25% to show that the reporter was more detailed in his or her expression and did not substitute unnecessarily so that the readers can fully understand the main ideas of the text. There was no manifestation of Ellipsis in the text, perhaps, the writer wants to be more detailed and does not want to omit words unnecessarily. However, not using ellipsis can lead to overly long sentences, which may make the text boring.

For the Lexical Cohesion, the most frequently used in this news report was Repetition (LR) which occurred seven (7) times with 46%. The reporter used this device to emphasize important points. This was also done so that the reporter would not be misinterpreted which could also enhance the reader to assimilate the reports. Synonym (LS) is next to repetition with five (6) occurrences and 40%, the writer used this tool to enrich the text which would add variety to the text. However, overuse of this tool can hamper the understanding of the text. Next are both Antonyms (LA) and Collocation (LC), having 7% with one (1) occurrence each. It was obvious that LA and LC were sparingly used in the text because of their indirect nature which might hamper the overall understanding of the text, especially collocation that the meanings are tied to the company of words they keep.

From Table 2, there were thirty-four (35) manifestations of both grammatical and lexical cohesion. Lexical cohesion occurred fourteen (15) times with grand percentage of 42.9, and

there were twenty (20) manifestations of grammatical features with grand percentage of 57.1. This showed that the reporter made use of grammatical cohesion than the lexical cohesion. It can be deduced from the analysis that the manifestations of cohesion in the news report bring out the creativity which helps to disambiguate information. With the use of cohesion, the news report is clear and easy to understand and this clarity is creatively employed by using lexical items that captivate the reader. Although the writer did not make use of some grammatical and lexical tools like Ellipsis, Polysemy, Metonymy and Hyponymy, she was still able to avoid ambiguity of information. The use of the cohesion tools enables the news report to flow smoothly from one point to the next which is creatively used for clarity and maintaining readers' interest. The manifestations of cohesion in this news report provide the structure for the creative use of words thereby engaging the audience. There is a balance between maintaining factual accuracy and adding a creative flair to make the report clear, more interesting and memorable. However, some lexical tools like metonymy, polysemy and hyponymy that the reporter did not make use of shows her level of education and linguistic competence.

## **7. Conclusion**

The examination of the creativity in the selected news reporting revealed usage of different cohesion tools to achieve different goals, particularly to disambiguate information. Beyond the fact that the reporter creatively used lexical items to project her aim and avoid ambiguity, she was able to communicate the speaker's ideas and values. This paper has added to the existing body of knowledge on cohesion and has equally added to the understanding of the use of language in media. The cohesion tools used in this text revealed the creativity embedded in the text which helps in simplifying complex lexical items that might lead to

ambiguity and misinterpretation of the text. It also encourages the public to stay informed about important issues which can lead to increased civic engagement that contribute to national development.

The study concluded that the main aim of any creative writing is to disambiguate information and enhance comprehension of any given text; this is achieved in this text. However, it cannot be ruled out that overuse and underuse of creative items may also hinder comprehension of any text. Therefore, it is recommended that writers should be innovative by integrating items that will aid creativity. However, they should be careful in creatively using lexical items to project their themes as the aim is to enhance the proper understanding of the text and disambiguate information. It must be stated, that this study is not all-exhaustive as far as media language is concerned and a lot of research on this can still be carried out using other linguistic levels of analysis.

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