

ISTBER

HND

JOURNALISM

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ESSENTIALS OF JOURNALISTIC STYLE

Style: Meaning and Dimensions

The term “Style” means different things to different people, under different situations, context or places. Its meaning ranges from the way a man lives to the latest in the world offashion. When applied to writing, style refers to anything from the philosophy and personality of the writer to his choice of words in sentences. According to McCrimmon (1974), style is a product of all the choice a writer makes in working out the implication of his purpose. If the choices are consistent, they reveal:

His view of the real subject.

His view of readers.

His person or personality.

The kind of material he selects

The way he structures, restructures and expresses his ideas, including the tone of his writing. The sum of all these factors make up a style. In essence therefore a description of any piece of writing is an explanation of the means by which the writer works out his purpose.

Types of Style

There are basically three types or kinds of style in writing. These are: Formal, Informal and Colloquial Styles.

The Formal Style.It is often called the academic style. It is characterised by a tone that is high-sounding, dignified and eloquent. The sentences are usually long, complex and refined in structure. It adheres to the strict syntactic demands of a particular language. The vocabulary is usually extensive, largely drawn from foreign and specialized/technical fields of learning like law, medicine, psychology. Such words are mostly used by those that are educated, and not by the uneducated. Other characteristics of formal style include avoidance of contractions (I’ve, can’t don’t) and clipped words like (exam, auto, ad). The paragraphs too, are usually long; the tone impersonal while the social distance between the reader and writer is generally official. This kind of style is not mostly embraced by the journalist or popular in journalism practice.

The Informal Style

This is a style that is multi-dimensional. It can be used for occasions like lectures, newspaper, broadcast etc. The diction here is a mixture of the formal style and that of colloquial. So, the popular diction is normally emphasized. By popular diction, one is referring to words which are used by a wide section of the populace, educated, uneducated. Compare the following learned and popular words:

Learned Popular

Abdomen Belly

Capitulate Surrender

Corpulent Fat

Myopic Short sighted

Facilitate Make easy.

Informal style is often more concrete and down to earth than formal ones that may appear abstract. That is, the diction of the informal style easily allows one to smell, see, touch or taste the object described. Sentences here are normally shorter than formal ones. The paragraphs, the tone and social distance between the writer and the reader is not wide, rather the reader can be addressed personally by using words such as 'you', 'me'. These are not common in formal style.

The Colloquial Style

This is a style of writing that is basically conversational. It uses the kind of words and expressions people use when they are together quite informally. Such a style is used in writing when the writer wants to give the impression of talking directly and intimately to his reader. When he does, all formal terms would be avoided while contraction, clipped words and clichés would be generally used. The sentences are usually very short, mainly the S-V-O (Subject-Verb-Object) sequence. The paragraphs are also short. This kind of writing is not common in journalism practice, except for special effect or used by a notable columnist.

Essentials of Good Journalistic Writing

News writing is an art whose skills have to be acquired. Like a sculptor, who has to chisel out something from the wood using perceived dimensions and procedures, the journalist employs the necessary tools of words or language in their appropriate forms, to accomplish his/her task. It is these forms that are broadly expressed as the "essentials of good journalistic writing" or, the 9cs and S. They are:

Clarity

Conciseness

Correctness

Courteousness

Candidness

Concreteness

Completeness

Coherence

Concord

Simplicity

Clarity

Clarity in news writing requires that the reader is left in no doubt as to the meaning of words in sentences. A word or groups of expression with more than one meaning should be replaced with a simple and clearer one. The good writer takes great pain of going an extra mile to ensure that he presents only one possible meaning. A news story that is open to more than one interpretation is dangerous to the reader, writer or society, because the multi-phase of such interpretations can lead to a confused society.

Conciseness

Conciseness deals with the necessity to be brief. A concise write-up is that which has to be written in a succinct way, avoiding pointless elaboration, exaggeration, tautology or circumlocution. A concise writer is one who does not strain after words or phrases. If he does this, he ends up using unnecessary jargons or clichés. According to Alexander Dope in one of his literary criticisms, words are like leaves; and where they are most abundant, much fruit is rarely found". Conciseness in writing has the merits of:

a) Saving space especially in newspaper where available pages are pre-scheduled. Or, in broadcast where time is the greatest asset and constraint to pointless elaboration.

(b) It spares much effort and achievement as well as give vigour and directness to writing.

Correctness

A news report must be correct in all aspects. It is one of the most important commandments of news writing. It is linked to the question of truthfulness and credibility. Correctness means checking and cross-checking figures, names of persons, town/cities, facts, spellings, maps etc. For local or even international names or places, there is always a stylebook or a resource person(s) who should assist in ensuring that the facts are made available. The dictionary, in its various forms can also be very useful in this connection.

Courteousness

Any writer that fails to take into account the sensibility of his readers, in terms of showing politeness or restraints in the use of language lacks polish and civility. This attitude readily offends the reader and is sometimes classified as one of the features of "low-brow journalism". There are a number of words or expressions that are not acceptable in polite writing. Many of them are those that depict sexual desires, racial slurs or profanities that are utterly against religious personalities or beliefs.

A polite expression or language as well as the filthy one is determined by the society. The reporter must therefore empathize with his society and present only those aspects of language, which his culture does not frown at. For instance, words like: 'Hell', "shift, Down", fuck, "under below" may mean different things to different societies. Although these words may pass for slang, they are sometimes fuzzy, imprecise and lack courtesy. Courteousness in writing also includes some standardized and general reference to personal titles and compliments.

Candidness

Being candid means that a report must be fair, frank, straight-forward, objective, and sincere in purpose. Although, the doctrine of fairness is often viewed as a threat to press freedom, it has, nevertheless, endowed the practice of journalism with a certain level of responsibility and service. This doctrine can also be seen as an aspect of the social responsibility view of mass media practice. So, the attribute of candidness demands that publishing one side of a story without a reasonable effort to get to know and present the other with all sense of frankness is dishonest and wicked. Thus, it is not enough for a reporter to say "when I called in his office to get his side of the story, he was not on seat". Since this can alter the charge of reporters biases or prejudices.

Concreteness

This concerns writing about actualities or particular events, persons, rather than generalities or abstractions. The need to write about concrete issues or events is felt more in the presentation of news and feature columns. Although the writer can report events in other context or in abstraction, as metaphors for explaining his own situational problem in the country. This should be done in a manner that the explanation is not lost in the minds on the readers.

Completeness

This calls for a reporter's readiness to present a total picture of an event i.e. the whole story, complete with all the essential parts. It calls for the inclusion of the necessary details about an issue in order to add some kind of muscle to the report. This has an added advantage of making a story clearer and leaving no room for guesses that might open pathways to misinterpretations. A complete picture is more useful than individual parts. If stoppages become unavoidable, then a report should be serialized. Yet, each part of the serial package should be meaningful and complete in relation to other parts.

Coherence

A report may have unity but lacks coherence. Coherence has to do with the sticking together, logically, of the parts that make up all story. It means every part in terms of ideas, facts, or details should have connection with the central idea of the story. Such a balanced flow in news writing can be achieved through the use of link words like: but, although, besides, meanwhile, except, however, nevertheless, also, etc.

Concord

Concord ordinarily means "agreement or harmony". Such agreement or harmony is required in news writing. Although there is no distinct line between what makes coherence different from concord, it can be said that agreement or concord starts from the construction of sentences. How the different parts of sentences are co-ordinated for meaningful interpretation. It includes the subject-verb agreement or pronoun- antecedent agreement. From here, it gradually joins up with agreement of parts from the introduction through the body to conclusion.

Simplicity

The purpose of news writing is to communicate meanings through news and not to confound or confuse. Therefore, a reporter must understand the background of his audience to enable him choose and use words that are not difficult or cumbersome enough to leave them searching for a dictionary. A good reporter must always replace difficult words with simpler ones. Even the technical register of some discipline

ELEMENTS OF GOOD NEWS REPORTING

TYPES INTERVIEWS

Interviewing: Meaning

A large chunk of what a reporter does, to get the necessary data for his stories revolves round meeting and asking people questions. It is the journalist's tool also, for digging out facts. This is where interview comes in. By way of definition, an interview is "any planned and controlled conversation between two or more people which has a purpose for, at least, one of the participants". To be effective, therefore, an interview must have (a) Purpose (b) Plan (c) Control interaction. But you can learn a great deal about the art of interview by learning how to interview. It is practically an exercise best learned by experience. The purpose of an interview may be specific depending on the type of interview. But all interviews are concerned with either obtaining, passing or clarifying information.

Types of Interview

There are many types of interview open to use by the journalist. The very familiar types are:

Exclusive interview: This is conducted by a reporter representing a single media house without any other reporter participating in it. Any information disclosed during the interview is only known to the reporter.

Panel Interview: This occurs when more than one reporter is seated to throw questions at an invited guest. It is frequently adopted or used by radio and television station.

Vox Populi or Man-in-the-street Interview: "Vox Populi" means the voice of the people. So, this type of interview is conducted by reporters to elicit information from a cross-section of the general public. It could be anybody in the street irrespective of the status or age. There is no fixed rule as to how many responses one must get. **Personality Interview:** This is an interview conducted by a reporter concerning an individual's life, activities, views, character or personality, etc. The selection of the personality is not limited to those who have gained places in the news stream of ongoing events, e.g. government officials, recognised businessman,

traditional ruler, professor or renowned academic, etc. A personality can also be out of the news stream but news worthy, by a special trait of oddity habit, play, hobby, etc. For instance, a priest who, Sunday after Sunday, preaches to an empty church auditorium deserves a special focus.

New Interview: An interview with one source is just the beginning of reporting. It can involve asking questions from several people, e.g. investigating a bank robbery. People to interview can include: bank clerks, security men, eye-witness (customers) etc. because time is the reporter's greatest enemy (deadline), he must be thorough as well as swift. He must ask right questions directed at the right persons.

Feature Interview: It is a form of article that focuses on an issue of general interest by interviewing one or more persons to present and analyse the issue. It presents a deeper insight into events than in news reports. It also allows for descriptive and stylish techniques not used in news writing usually done around events that have already made news. Reporter would talk to more sources than for news story.

It is a type of creative writing which takes a lot of preparation e.g. of a fatal road accident that claimed many lives. This can motivate a news feature on e.g. for interview with experts in highway, Police Traffic Officers, Road Safety Officials (FRSC), medical officers, drivers of commercial vehicles, and or persons who have survived such accidents etc. what about the Tsunami Disaster? Hurricane Katrina etc?

Sport News Interview: Reporters interview police officers on crime, fire marshals on causes of fire outbreaks; sports reporters talk to coaches, players for background materials for games stories. In sport news interviews, reporters look for information that will highlight or illustrate the events being described.

Techniques of Interview

Newsgathering requires tact, common sense and knowledge of interviewing techniques. Successful interviews are the result of careful planning and preparation on the part of one or both participants. Good interviewers and interviewees are not born but are made. They practice the skill until they appear to be able to do it without much effort. The notable interviewing techniques are: Preparation: This reminds one of the saying that "perspiration in preparation is inspiration in presentation". It requires that the reporter must read, research and know much about the person or subject to be discussed in the interview. The reporter must get to know the person's past, or the views about the subject in the past. It all boils down to preparation.

Have Questions Stated: This means that a reporter should prepare a set of basic questions meant for the interview. The approach must not be rigid. It can be structured (e.g. Yes or No answers) or unstructured (the respondent is free to say anything). Allowance should also be made for supplementary questions. With time, you will learn not to strictly rely on a prepared list of questions. The natural informal and conversational order would then prevail.

Use of Mechanical Device: In order to ensure accurate report of what is said during an interview, a tape recorder is recommended for use but care must be taken to avoid situations where the presence of the recorder can disrupt the flow of ideas/response from the interviewee. The person might feel unsafe and exposed to give out information that is recorded.

Appearance: This calls for modesty in your dressing habit. A reporter must be well dressed for an interview. Excessive make-up is undesirable. Remember, there is no second time first impression. The first is the first and nothing more.

Be on Time: This calls for an avoidance of African time syndrome. Arrangements should be made for the journalist to be at the venue at least, 30 minutes before time schedule.

Eye Contact: Good interview involves good observation of what is happening around the interviewee. A reporter that refuses, for any reason, to maintain good eye contact during an interview might be missing lots of non-verbal cues necessary for his report. This does not mean that one should stare or gaze at the other person to the point of causing an embarrassment.

Note Taking: A reporter should listen attentively during an interview. If he does not know the formal shorthand writing, he can develop the abbreviated long handwriting, for his purpose. Only the important points should be taken down. Excessive scribbling/writing should be avoided, although it is better to be on that part of “too much”, than being on the part of “too little”.
Verification: Before ending an interview, quoting statements, names, figures and dates should be cross-checked for accuracy. At the end, express your gratitude to the interviewee.

NEWS SOURCES

The ‘where’ of news refers to the sources of information opened to the journalist. Primarily, a reporter begins his day with the house diary. The diary contains all the expected events of the day as perceived and recorded by the editor. The next source of data for the journalist is the library, also called the “Morgue”. Here, the reporter has access to newspaper clippings, journals, periodicals, concordance, magazines and other confidential publications of the government. In any case, it is essential to make a list of news categories and their vital sources of information for writing each story.

Government News

Government gazettes, daily press releases, etc.

Ministry of Information

Secretary to the State Government’s Office

Public Relations/Information Managers of Ministries

Head of Public Service and Director Generals

All Ministries (Federal/State)

Statistics and Planning Offices

Mass Media Organs

Legislature (State and National)

Business and Labour News

Business and Labour Organisation, e.g. NLC and other Union Secretariats

Business Institution (private and public)

Finance Houses e.g. Banks, Insurance companies

Ministries of Trade, Commerce and Industries

Mass Media Organs

Stock Exchange Officers

Sport News

National Sport Commission

Sport Organisations e.g. FECAFOOT

Sport Festivals

Sport Magazines, Journals and Programmes

Sports Ministry

Sport Personalities (Old and New), etc.

Court and Police News

Court Proceedings, Tribunals

Police Stations and Military Offices

Ministry of Justice

Judges and Lawyers

Secret Investigation Bureau e.g. FIIB, SSS, CID

Media Reports

Special commissions e.g. EFCC.

3.4.5 Accident and Natural Disaster News

Place of Accident - Disaster/Relief Commission

Hospital Police - Airways, Transporters

Ministry of Health - Embassies

Fire Service - International Health

Universities and Research Centre - Servitors

Foreign News

Ministry of External Affairs Embassies and High Commissions Nigerian Institute of International Affairs
International Organisations, UNESCO, ILO, WHO
Foreign Media Outlets
Ministry of Information
National, Regional and International News Agencies e.g. NAN (News Agency of Nigeria), PANA (Pan African News Agency), Reuters, UPI (United Press International), AFP (Agence France Presse) TASS (Telegrafnoye Aгенstvo Sovetskano Soyusa), etc

EDITING THE COPY

INTRODUCTION

Ordinarily, to edit means to make something short or shorter. In journalism, it means to remove unwanted matter in the news. It is an important aspect of any media persons work irrespective of whether or not the person works for the print or broadcast media.

Copy Editing

Copyediting can be variously described. It can be called copyediting, news editing, or copy reading. They all mean the same thing. But before any meaningful editing can be achieved, the copy editor must have a good knowledge of the subject. He must be current as well as be an expert in the language being used. Furthermore, the editor should be flexible and tolerant. He should be that person who is capable of appreciating the work of other people. In summary, therefore, a good editor must be versed in the subject in question, an expert in the language use, and others liberal arts. Editing is done to eliminate unnecessary details. It is also done to effect corrections that are bound to be there. Such editing are often carried out in an editing room, using a specially designed table known as copy desk, with a slot man at the helm of affairs. A copy desk is that object around which copy editors sit. The slot man controls the activities of the team. Writers of all sorts need editors even when they have had time to go over their own work. They need editing despite the fact that they took pains to read through such work. In short, such a writer does not exist whose work cannot be improved by the constructive vigilance of an editor, who is:

Versed in what is written about.

An expert in language use

A flexible and tolerant person capable of appreciating values in the work of others. Moreover, news writing has a special need for copy readers because most news writing is done at high speed. They are often written in haste. Reporters are usually under severe pressure. Consequently, are prone to mistake or bound to make slips and need some help in verifying and organising their facts. The quality of every newspaper is dependent on the array of its copyreaders. The copydesk is the heart of the newspaper and the character of the newspaper is determined by its copy desk

The Copy Desk has three major functions.

Creative function.

Managerial function

Policing function

Creative Function

This function largely centres around the following activities: First, the desk judges the news of the day and makes decisions about how it shall be presented. Second, it assembles single stories and spreads from materials originating from a variety of sources. In this way, the desk editor is said to be creative when he can originate an idea such as merging two or

more stories from different reporters on the same topic or related topic. Such write-ups carry peculiar phrases like: “in a similar development or” in another development “or” in another development”. Creativity also involves assembling and selecting related stories into a single story or a big spread. Copy editors write headlines, captions and outlines. Captions are found at the top making scanty details of the pictures while outlines are found below with more details. Another area of creativity deals with space management, which is the major problem of print media as against the problem of time in the electronic media.

Managerial Function

This function consists of the three activities enunciated below. One, the desk directs the work of the compositors and printers. This they do through marking copy with the style of type the compositor is expected to set it in. Managerial function can also be called administrative function. The major divisions of a typical newspaper organisation are the business, the editorial, and the production divisions. In the editorial division are the editor, copy desk, editorial writers and photographic section. Copy desk give directives to compositors in the production division. This relationship forms the major link between the two distinct divisions namely the editorial and production divisions respectively. Copy desk directs and adjusts stories.

They also prepare fillers and time copy. As the name implies, fillers are ready made stories specially deigned to fill up extra spaces in newspaper. These stories must as a matter of necessity, be fresh and timely. On the other hand, time copy are those copies that are funny and entertaining, and of general interest. Managerial function aims at avoiding waste and instead tries to adjust the volume of copy to the available space before it is sent to the composing room to be set in type. This managerial function also strives to meet emergencies with plenty of filler and time copy on hand at all times. In this way there are hardly open spaces.

Policing Function

The copy desk's chief function is the job of policing the content of the paper. It is the most important of all the functions because it safeguards the paper against errors and libel. It corrects grammatical errors, crosschecks facts, and marked necessary interpretation to avoid ambiguity. Sometimes this policing function may slip the copy desk or it may decide to undermine the consequence in which case the newspaper may face libellous suits. In the light of the above, the desk checks copy against errors of facts and interpretation of ambiguous statements. Secondly, it guides the newspaper's position against being sued for libel and other legal difficulties. Thirdly, it guides public confidence in the paper by ensuring objectively, fair play and good taste. Finally, it improves the flow and corrections of language so as to clarify the news and make it more meaningful.

The individual copy editor should have many things in mind as he works on a story. Among those things he must do are: He must eliminate errors of spelling, grammar and sentence structure. He must be conscious of taste, style, fact and organisation. He must guard against unwarranted reportorial bias, verbosity, repetition, incongruity, wearisome details, overlooked facts, zealous statements, and advertising in disguise as well as old and a grinding news.

Copy Editor Tools

In a bid to do his work effectively and efficiently, the copy editor needs a set of tools namely: Physical and Intellectual tools. The physical tools come under specific headings including equipments, reminders, copy editing symbols, and references.

Equipment

The copy reader's obvious physical tools comprise the following: A special editing pencil with broad and soft lead and slightly bigger than the normal ordinary HB pencil. A clean eraser for neatly cleansing any wrongly written words or sentences. Scissors and paste which are supposed to be used only when necessary A typewriter that will be used only when it will do the job quicker than the other tools.

A telephone within reach which will be put in use for communication with staff and non staff members to clarify facts and issues.

Reminder

Besides other physical tools the copy editor has certain reminder within reach. Some of these include the office style sheet and the headline schedule. Also included is a detailed headline count system, which serves as a guide for the headline writing.

Copy Editing Symbols

Another aspect of the physical tool available to the copyreader is the shorthand he uses always to tell the compositor how he wants the original copy changed. The copy reading symbols vary slightly from newspaper to newspaper and depends on what each organisation is used to. The symbols are not quite distinct from one another. Here are some examples adapted from two sources.

Reference

Reference of any kind constitutes yet another set of physical tools always employed by the copy reader. The extent and appropriateness of reference materials like books available on the editing desk vary from one desk to another. However a minimum list of reference necessary in every desk consist of the following:

An unabridged dictionary

The city Directory

The State Handbook

City and area telephone director

Good Atlas

City, country and state maps

Who is who in Nigeria

The world Almanac

Year Hooks

Roget's Thesaurus

Book of Quotations

Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage.

Webster Dictionary with its rich information

Other general references.

Intellectual Tools

The most important of the copy editor's tool are the intellectual tools. It is assumed and rightly too that the present day copyeditor is an educated and literate person putting all the available tools to work for the purposes of producing an accurate, dependable, well written and grammatically correct as well as interesting and sound newspaper. The list of the copy editor's intellectual tools is inexhaustible.

In any case, the following may be assumed as the list of intellectual tools a copy editor often needs. Thorough knowledge of English grammar, sentence structure and style.

Thorough knowledge of the copy desk current routine. Thorough knowledge of how to use the references available to him. Proper knowledge of the community the newspaper is expected to serve. Broad general awareness and solid educational background. Common sense and even disposition as well as good sense of continuity of news. The last two are crucial and fundamental as they are real assets to the copyreaders. Generally, the copyreader must have respect for the viewpoints and special problems, of his co-workers and the reading public. As a matter of necessity he must have a feeling for what others can and will read. He should have a sense of balance in all major decisions he makes. Of course, cool judgement is probably the most important of all intellectual tools. The phrase "Sub this story" means "edit the story".

Editing Symbols

Typing Errors (known as typos): If you wish to capitalise a letter or word, underline it with two parallel lines, thus:

Bob hawke condemned the usa.

To turn a capital letter(known as an upper case letter) into a non- capital (or lower case letter), place a small slash mark through the top of the letter, to the bottom thus:

Set this in UPPERCASE

To delete a word or phrase, draw a horizontal line through it. If, as is usual, you wish the space thus created to be ignored, place a bridge above and below the line to signify that you wish the space to be closed, thus: He says the bomb should not have been dropped. To take out a single letter draw the delete line vertically, thus:

Never hand your copy in before reading it through carefully.

To insert space between words place an insertion mark, like this between the words. The Vice Chancellor has warned students... In the print media, to insert a letter, word or phrase an insertion mark (or slash mark) is placed at the relevant point and the extra materials is written above the type, thus:

“It is not true that I w/rk for Rupert”. She said.

In the broadcast media, a single letter must not be inserted. The whole of the incorrect word should be deleted with a horizontal line and the new word written out in full above. Also, the insertion mark differs from that used in print, thus:

worked

She said it was true that she wr/ked for Nupeng.

In the haste to get a story down on paper journalists sometimes transpose letters, words or phrases. To correct this typo draw a horizontal S around the offending materials so that the letter, word or phrase below the S-line is placed before that above this

line, thus:

The man dead is identified as ...

(NOTE: Some authorities say the S-line should be reversed e.g. for need then becomes for need. Others say this reversal should only happen when single letters are to be transposed. However, the subbing mark in this course will be the one above.)

Most publications use abbreviations, particularly for titles. Some everyday abbreviations, however, are often not acceptable in some publications. What is acceptable and what is not acceptable on a particular publication is part of the publication's house style.

Most publications hand new journalists a style book that contains instructions on what is, and is not, acceptable. A journalist, particularly one recently arrived from another

publication, can make a mistake on abbreviations. To correct this, the offending material should be circled, so that a word that has been abbreviated will be spelt out in full, or a word that has been spelt out in full will be abbreviated, thus:

Col Wale said Tamuno Briggs was a twit.

(NOTE: The rule is that when an abbreviation ends with the same letter as the full word, then no full stop should be used. If it does not, then use a full stop, thus:

Prof. John Brainstorm criticised Dr. Jane Bookworm).

The use of numbers in copy is also subject to house style. Some have to be typed in letters, some in figures. If the wrong style has been used, circle the offending materials, thus: He accused the 2 teenagers of stealing one thousand naira worth of valuables

Punctuation Errors: While typos can be corrected in ink, punctuation corrections should be made in pencil. This is because the sub-editors may not agree with the punctuation. If it is in pencil they can rub out the reporter's mark.

To insert a full stop, place an insertion mark in the relevant place in the copy. Above the mark draw in a dot and circle it, thus:

.

“It is over/” he said “I will go no further”

Some journalists use a cross in a circle. This is probably because the Pitman’s shorthand symbol for a full stop is a cross by itself. (NOTE: Use the same procedure for a colon, thus:

The University Senate decided the following students: Ade,

Bassey, Okonkwo..

For a comma, place an insertion mark at the relevant place and draw in a comma above the line, with a small slash above it, thus: ,

“It is over/” he said.

(NOTE: To insert a semi-colon, use the same procedure as for a comma. ;His uncles are/ Baba, Shalolo, Danjuma For an apostrophe, use the same procedure as for comma, but place the small slash below, thus:

,

A journalists/ duty is to be accurate. For quotation marks, use the same procedure as for an apostrophe, but reverse the double commas where necessary,

thus:

?“This is an accurate report/“ he said

In some newsrooms the small slash mark under the quotation marks is replaced with either a V or a Y

For a hyphen, place an insertion mark at the relevant place and draw above the line a short horizontal line between the vertical lines, thus:

The prosecutor said that this was not a run of the will case Journalists should try to avoid using dashes. If, however, they must insert one, an insertion mark should be placed at the relevant place and a short vertical line, followed by two short horizontal lines and another short vertical line should be drawn

above, thus:

Journalists with some exception are good writers. Parenthesis, or brackets, should be drawn in at the relevant point,

thus:

BROADCAST STYLE WRITING STYLE

INTRODUCTION

The various media seek basically the same type of information. However, there are basic differences in how these media write and edit their materials. Oral style has to do with the selection and placement of stories in the simplest manner. The public is trained to observe with its eyes but not with its ears. The eye and the ear must transmit signals to the brain. But the ear must transmit them the first time it hears. It cannot go back and rehear unlike the eye that can go back and reread. So when you write for the ear, you must do so in the fashion that will assure the highest probability of accurate reception and transmission of your signals to the brain. This means that an oral writer must simplify his own and other people's ideas; thoughts, words, language, sentence and punctuation.

Broadcast Style Manual

A style manual is preparing, copy for the air is essential if copy preparation is to be uniform. It is strongly suggested that this manual be mastered carefully before you try to write for the air. In this style manual, you are going to learn how to handle the following when writing for the air:

- **Abbreviations:** The general rule is not to use abbreviations unless you want the material read as abbreviations. With few exceptions, abbreviations are barred from oral copy. Exceptions from this rule are Mr.; Mrs., Dr., etc. Also excepted are well known organisations that are readily identifiable in the initials like FBI, EFCC, etc and there are usually a hyphen between letters i.e. F-B-I, E-F-C-C. Abbreviated names of some organisations are pronounced as a single word and do not require hyphens. Examples are NEPA, NATO, NAFDAC, etc.
- **Names and Titles:** Never start a write up with an unfamiliar name. It is your responsibility as a radio and TV writer to tell announcers how to pronounce difficult or unfamiliar names. Titles are not repeated after first reference to a person.
- **Quotations:** Handling direct quotations in oral copy presents a special problem because quotation marks cannot be seen by the listener. Therefore, the newscaster or presenter must have some way of letting listeners know exactly when a direct quote starts and when it ends. You the writer can help the presenter by rephrasing direct quotations into indirect quotes. The expressions – quote and unquote was widely used in the early days of radio but has become largely obsolete. Other expressions have come into use such as – He said... and we quote him... As he put it.... Still quoting the president...
- **Numbers:** Numbers in radio and TV writing present a special problem. It is difficult for listeners to grasp the meaning of statistics in rapidly read copy. In writing time, use figures don't use PM or AM. They can be confusing on the air. Use this morning, this afternoon, tonight. In writing addresses, dates and ordinals, use figures. Use st, nd, rd, th, after figures

to be read as ordinals. In telephone numbers and car plate number, use hyphenated figures e.g. BZ 1-8-7-ENU the numbers repeated on air.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

How do we handle quotation and abbreviations on air?

Approaches to Oral Writing

Simplicity is the central approach of writing for the air. The public is trained to observe with its eyes but not with its ears. The eye and the ear must transmit signals to the brain. But the ear must transmit them the first time it hears your message. It cannot go back and rehear, as the eye can go back and reread written communication so when you write for the ear, you must do so in the fashion. Fashion that will assure the highest probability of accurate reception and transmission of your signals to the brain. This means that before you put pen on paper to write for Radio and TV, you must simplify your ideas, thoughts, words, language, sentences and punctuation. Begin simplifying your language by simplifying your sentences. The best way to communicate on air is the simple declarative sentence – subject – verb – object. However, you must guide against the habit of short, jerky and disconnected sentences and thoughts. Your writing should have transition, should flow. Talk to the paper as you write. This will help you gain the conventional approach. Generally you can and should avoid complicating phrases and clauses. Most punctuation for broadcasting will be commas, periods and dashes.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

List and discuss the essentials before you write for the air.

Hearing What You Write

An average person, when setting down his thoughts in writing sees what he has said. An experienced radio writer hears his copy as he writes it. He has trained his mind to work in terms of sound rather than sight. This helps simplify his writing. Learning to hear your copy as you write is a difficult but valuable knack in radio writing. The best way to develop this ability and the surest way to determine whether your oral copy is listenable is to read it aloud. If you have used words or word sequences that are hard or awkward to read, or if you find yourself running out of breath, you can be sure the presenter will have similar difficulties. So to simplify your writing, read it aloud as you write it.

It is important to follow this advice when writing for the ear. Direct your writing at a 90-year-old grandmother who is half deaf. This will help you select words that are easy to hear. Also direct your writing at a 9-year-old to enable you use words and expressions that are easy to understand. But you must sound intellectual enough so that the 40-year-old executive will listen. If you can combine these three elements in your writing, you will be off to a good start on writing for the air. Wimer et al (1969:61).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

What are the benefits of hearing what you write?

3.4 Warming Up the Listener

Warming up the listener is almost a headline technique. It does the same thing as the headline by giving a fact or two as a summary of what is to follow. According to UPI, don't try to write too much in your opening sentence. The listener requires a little time to get adjusted after each story. An attention getting opener that sells the write up to the listener at the outset will keep his interest; make him want to hear more. We have two types of warm ups viz: the generalized warm up where there is a generic statement with specific facts following. Another one is the interpretative warm up that is an interpretational round up of several items grouped into one write up. The use of warm up in broadcast writing is determined by each writer with respect to each individual programme. As a writer,

you will learn to use the warm up effectively only through experience. The philosophy behind warmups and broadcast writing is that the listener may not actually “hear” those first few words. The oral writer is faced with the problem of getting the listener’s full attention without jamming into those first few words.

To meet this problem, experienced radio/TV writers frequently use the warm up method of telling the listener to come awake and listen closely. Consequently therefore, the first sentence of a broadcaster write up should:

(i) Catch the listener’s attention (ii) Orient him and prepare him for what is to follow.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Why is it necessary to warm up the listener?

Writing to Pictures

Right from the outset of this Unit, we have lumped radio and TV writing under the oral style. This is generally correct because both are written for the ear. However, TV writing presents a peculiar task because there must be a fusion between pictures and words. In creating this fusion between words and pictures, the TV writer runs into problem of moving his audience from topic to topic. A typical TV viewer has three difficulties viz: (i) seeing the picture (ii) Hearing the words (iii) Translating the picture and the words into a general understanding of the topic. Writing to the picture requires a very specialized skill. You will write to cues. In other words, you will write for periods when viewer will be seeing only the presenter and for periods when viewers will be seeing only the picture. You must be aware of the condition between pictures and sound for the viewer’s attention when the camera is on the presenter writer in a way that words will dominate. But when the camera is on the picture you will write to subordinate the words. Writing to the picture cannot be taught by formula. It can’t be standardized. You will learn it only by writing to many pictures on many different situations. You can get a good deal of realistic training by clipping still pictures, organizing them into sequence or montage and writing to them. According to Wermer (1969:199), it is hard to tell you how to write to pictures. Many of the professionals themselves cannot tell you just how they do it because it is more of feeling.

Below are some few advice from professionals:

- Before you write your scripts, try to see the picture or film. If this is not possible then you write entirely from a spot sheet listing scenes order.
- Best procedure is to cue the words as closely as possible to the picture
- Write to the picture but try to avoid mentioning the picture by avoiding expressions like “seen here”, “shown here”, “here we see” it is better to describe what the viewer is seeing with as few references to the picture as possible.
- Write your script to exact time limit as specified by your station. Normally for a programme of 30 minutes, you are expected to script for 25 minutes.
- In tackling the question of which terms to use, it is important to note that you use the logical terms. Use the terms that best fit the situation.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

List the advice from professional oral writers.

Common Errors to Avoid

- A bull is red-headed, but a secretary is red-haired.
- Something is unique, but not very unique or most unique
- He was graduated from University, will be graduated, is to be graduated, not he graduated, will graduate is to graduate.
- Injured refers to a person; damage refers to objects.
- A resolution is adopted while an ordinance is passed.
- Don't say a person broke his arm unless he did so deliberately.
- A person doesn't sustain a fatal injury, receive is better. Sustain means to bear up under.
- An event that has not been arranged or planned occurs while preplanned event like wedding, a party or a conference takes place and death occurs.
- Who refers to persons which to animals, things or ideas. That refers to person, animal, things or ideas.
- Mrs. Jones is the widow of John Jones, not the late John Jones.
- A person died of AIDS, not from AIDS.
- Collective nouns generally take singular verbs and neuter gender
- Heart diseases is an ailment of the heart; heart failure is what occurs everytime anybody dies.
- Trials verdicts should be reported as acquittals or convictions instead of guilty or not guilty. Also he pleaded innocent, or pleaded guilty, not, pleaded not guilty.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 6

How do we use WHO, WHICH, and THAT on oral copy.

Punctuation Marks

The punctuation is essential in oral writing because it helps the presenter. The Radio and TV writer, then, punctuates for the man or woman at the microphone not for the public. Most common punctuation marks in oral writing are the period, comma and dash.

According to AP, it is grammatically correct to write – John Smith, Junior, was elected. But it is not good oral writing, because the natural way to say it is – John Smith Junior was elected – without pausing before and after Junior. For the same reason it is not necessary to write – Robert Brown, of Benin, died today. It is better to leave out both commas. Because if the announcer read it that way, he would say – Robert Brown (pause) of Benin (pause) died today. Remember that as an oral writer, you use punctuation only where you want the presenter to follow directions.

PERIODS

The period marks the end of a sentence, though it calls for a pause or change of pace. More periods are used in oral writing than in newspaper writing. This is because the presenters prefer shorter sentences and because the period takes the place of the colon.

COMMAS

The comma calls for a shorter pause than does a period. But do not use it unless you want the presenter to pause for effect.

DASH

The dash in radio is a double hyphen - - it is frequently used as a substitute for other punctuation marks indicating a pause or parenthetical matter. It is intended to help the presenter use his voice to the best advantage in oral presentation. It is used to call for a longer pause than comma.

conclusion

The broadcast media have the glamour that have made many people in society to depend on it for information and entertainment. Because of peculiar nature, write the oral copy depend some specialskills which we have tried to discuss in this unit. This area of mass media writing is a popular area because of the high level of awareness in society. Broadcast technology is advancing so much and it is posing a lot of challenges to oral writing.