

# A Linguistic-Stylistic Study of Ray Ekpu's and Gbenga Adebambo's Columns in *The Guardian* (Nigerian) Newspapers

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## Abstract

This study undertakes a comparative analysis of the stylistic features in the columns of Ray Ekpu and Gbenga Adebambo in *The Guardian* Newspaper. The data corpus for the study comprises 26 selected articles of each columnists between January and August, 2019. The study identifies and analyses the styles deployed by the columnists, and accounts for the themes that influence their writing styles. The implications of the stylistic features on their writings are also discussed. Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) by M.A.K. Halliday and the Stylistic Theory of Adebayo Lawal were deployed for the data analysis. The results reveal that the columnists used many styles to convey their messages to the readers. The findings further show that themes have influence on the style of writing. Both writers employed simple sentences to achieve logical and step-by-step presentation of ideas and complex sentences were common syntactic features in the columns. The paper concludes that newspaper columnists should select themes that are relevant and current in order to meet the needs of their readers for better public enlightenment and the development of the nation.

## Introduction

Language as a means of communication is also used for mass communication by media professionals. For effectiveness, the media have different branches or outlets through which information is disseminated. Its major branches are the broadcast and print media. Broadcast media is further sub-divided into television, radio and the internet, while the print media comprises newspapers, magazines and journals. Journalists use language in different forms, manners and styles to pass information to the public through any of the media routes stated above. The essence of this study is to examine how two journalists writing for the same newspaper organization use language in writing their column articles on a weekly basis.

The media, especially the newspaper, is an important institution in every society. Whichever roles or functions it plays at a particular time matters a great deal. A particular news feature story, editorial comment, personal commentary, etc. that is published in a newspaper could play multiplicity of roles. It could serve as a platform to access information on the item of the news published; it could serve as a mirror or a reflection of the social reality of the item published; it could have elements or ingredient of discernment that accelerates understanding of the news published. All of these could be combined in one way or the other to affect the level of understanding, knowledge, attitudes and actions of the reading public in determining the course, shape or effect of an event, action or situation (Akanbi, 2020).

The press as a watchdog of the society has the ability and capability to determine and scrutinize what to report, when and how to report it, as well as where it will be published (Ibrahim and Yakubu, 2013). Looking at the power of the press, Dennis and Merrill (1994, p. 4) state that "the media are quite powerful". In this sense, it could be inferred that the press tells us what to think and how to think. The meaning here is that the press can manipulate people's perception about an issue.

According to Fer, (2010), the analysis of journalists' language leads to an overview of the components of journalists' language structure, enriched with information aimed at removing some confusion that exists in its respect. The study of this kind of language involves identifying different types of media language by different broadcast channels and creating a type of writing required by stylistic qualities such as brevity, clarity and pragmatism of the discourse. The journalistic style is distinguished mainly by accuracy, freshness of the language, honesty, appropriateness and efficiency (Preda, 2006).

According to Labov (1991), the language of journalism also reveals as a mirror of the wider society and culture; this kind of language affects attitudes and opinions in society through the way it presents people and issues. Media language has a double function: it may tell things about media itself and about the language used by journalists. Sociolinguists have tended to consider media as a second class means of getting access to the conversational data. Social pressures are continually operating upon language, not from some remote point in the past, but as imminent social force acting in the living present.

Journalists have their own way or style of using language that can promote national development. Conversely, they may also use language in a way that can throw a nation into crisis. Like any other field, journalism has certain linguistic features that make its language distinct and unique. This study focused on the linguistic features in the column writings of Ray Ekpu and Gbenga Adebambo who are both journalists with *The Guardian* newspaper. The media men especially those who work in the print media (journalists) are special breed of writers. In other words, they have special methods of using words in captioning headlines in order to attract the attention of the readers, or to exhibit the editorial inclination of the newspaper(s) they represent. The choice of words by journalists is often sensitive or weighty prompting Agu (2010, p. 173) to opine that "journalists build the nation or even contribute in destroying what has been built over the years through the use of words." This study examined the choice of words, sentence structures and themes used for column articles written by Ray Ekpu and Gbenga Adebambo who are journalists with *The Guardian* newspaper.

This study explored the stylistic use of language by journalists especially in the print media. The languages used by journalists enable them to create and maintain relationship with the target audience or readers (Umaru, Hamza & Sherndama, 2013). In doing this, journalists perceive the world correctly through the power of language. The creation of relationship between them and the readers is done through the language that they can understand. It is usually through the language of journalism that

communities get their information (Rhetorica, 2010). The language of the print media, by extension the language of journalism, is not the same with the language of medicine, law, engineering or architecture (Umaru, et al. 2013). The study compared and analysed the linguistic features in the writings of two columnists in *The Guardian* newspaper, Ray Ekpu and Gbenga Adebambo, as it reflects in their unique personalities, thoughts and styles.

The corpus for this study was column articles gathered from *The Guardian* Newspaper published between January and August, 2019. Twenty six column articles were selected for Ray Ekpu and 26 column articles for Gbenga Adebambo. Out of the population of 26 articles for each of them, 21 articles were selected using purposive sampling technique.

### **Profiles of Gbenga Adebambo and Ray Ekpu**

Gbenga Adebambo is a renowned youth empowerment coach with a strong vision of empowering youths to becoming agents of transformation, locally and globally. An astute preacher of God's word, international coach and the Dean of schools in one of the foremost leading Advanced Levels schools in Nigeria, Educational Advancement Centre. He is a pastor in Christ Life Church and he is the founder of the youth ministry called STOP 'T' (seeing tomorrow's opportunities and potentials today) a ministry that is involved in discovering and nurturing hidden potentials in youths in order to equip them for tomorrow's challenges, opportunities and responsibilities. He is also an educational consultant, minister of God's word, a mentor on the Tony Elumelu Forum, success coach and a change agent.

Adebambo operates a strong deliverance ministry for youths that are under the bondage of addiction and sexual immorality. He is a voice against toxic relationships, low self-esteem, sexual perversions, abuse, and destructive addictions. He is also the Editor-in-chief of the *Maximum Impact* magazine. A magazine that has been specially packaged to inspire, nurture, prepare, and impact the youth. His prophetic ministry has been a source of great blessing to the youths all over the world. He graduated from the University of Ibadan where he had his BSc (Chemistry) and MSc (Analytical Chemistry). He is a columnist in *The Guardian* newspaper where he runs a youth column every Saturday called "Youths with Purpose". He also runs a column on Naijagist.Com and *The Good Men Project* (USA).

### **Profile of Ray Ekpu**

Ray Ekpu was born on 6th August, 1948 in Ukanafnn, Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. He had his secondary education at Ibibio State College, Ikot Ekpene between 1960 and 1964 and his Higher School Certificate at the Holy Family College, Abak between 1966 and 1968. He bagged his first degree in Mass Communication from the University of Lagos, Nigeria and his Master's degree at Indiana State University, Bloomington, United States of America. Ray Ekpu is a veteran journalist and prose craftsman, a public writer, a renowned columnist, analyst and an informed commentator. He worked in several

media organizations such as: *Nigerian Chronicle*, Calabar, *Concord* Newspaper and *Newswatch* Magazine. He is a fellow of the Guild of Editors, a recipient of National Union of Journalist Award and was conferred with the Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON) by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Mr. Ekpo's writings have been published in several Nigerian newspapers and magazines as well as in such foreign publications as the Portland Oregonian, Milwaukee Sentinel, New York Times, International Herald Tribune and the *Journal of Democracy*.

### Literature Review

A considerable amount of work has been done within the area covered by the study such as that done by Pam (2012), Umaru (2013), Mugair and Mahadi (2014), Agu (2015) and Udeze (2017) among others. Pam (2012) worked on a topic similar to Agu's (2015) which is, "A Linguo-Stylistic Analysis of Newspaper Reportage on the 2010 and 2011 Crises in Jos: A Case Study of The Nation and This Day". He revealed that editorial writers have consistently manipulated language to achieve their aims. Language, in whichever way it is used, is not an end in itself but a means to an end. It is a tool used in achieving a variety of communicative goals or meeting certain needs imposed upon human life and experiences.

The paper takes a critical look at the way English language is used in editorials to effectively communicate sensitive issues. These sensitive issues cut across security, religion, health and a wide variety of academic subject fields. This research explores the linguistic and communicative significance of the editorials in influencing readers' attitudes as regards the crisis in Jos and its environs. Its objectives are to identify those linguistic features of grammar, lexis and semantics that have been used distinctively by editorials to portray the 2010 and 2011 crises in Jos. The investigation is based on the analysis of eleven editorials in 'The Nation' and 'This Day' newspapers between the periods under review. This demonstrates that the good writer consciously manipulates linguistic and stylistic devices in order to communicate effectively.

Bagale (2012) has carried out the research entitled "An Analysis of the English Language Used in Different Newspaper Editorials." The major objectives of her study were to find out the characteristic features of the language used in *Nepali English* newspaper editorials in terms of: sentence types, sentence length, voice, tense (past and non-past), aspect (perfective and progressive) heading and style of writing and Subject-Verb proximity. She selected 30 editorials from newspapers and applied judgment sampling, which is one of the most useful non-probability sampling procedures. Observation and un-structured interview were the tools for data collection. Finally, she found that *The Himalayan Times* published two editorials in a day whereas *The Kathmandu Post* published only one editorial in a day. Regarding sentence types, complex sentences are used most frequently in both dailies i.e. 229 out of 465 which are 49 percent in THT and 180 of 350 which is 52 percent in TKP.

Petrova (2012) conducted a research entitled "Stylistic Peculiarities of Newspaper Headlines to Attract Readers' Attention: The Escape Supplement of the Observer

Newspaper.” The study analysed peculiarities of newspaper headlines and peculiarities of articles which attract the attention of readers most. A survey was conducted among ordinary readers of the “Escape Supplement of the Observer Newspaper.” As a result of the survey, it was found out that the main factor that affects the attractiveness of the article’s headline is interest in headline theme and using words which heated curiosity of the readers. This research will not dwell too much on the theme of the column articles but the focus will be on lexico-semantic and the syntactic features.

Umaru, et al. (2013) worked on “A Stylistic Analysis of the Syntactic Features and Cohesive Devices in the Columnist’s Use of English Language in Nigerian Newspapers”. The corpus for the study consisted of five texts selected from different Nigerian Newspapers. The result of the study revealed that dependent clauses are prevalent which serve as extension of the ideas in the independent clauses. There also abound simple sentences which are used by the writers to achieve logical and step by step presentation of ideas. The reader finds them easy to understand since they convey only single idea. Complex sentences were as well noted as common syntactic features in the columnists’ use of language. Through the use of complex sentences, columnists supply additional information to what obtains in the main clause either by serving subordinate clause before the main clause or after it. Similarly, compound sentences were employed by the columnists as a means of conveying more than a single idea in a stretch of language. Coordinating conjunctions therefore were used as joining or linking devices. The analysis of the cohesive device showed that substitution and reference cohesions were the predominant cohesive devices used. Both the cataphoric and anaphoric references were predominant. The columnists, based on the outcome of the study, used intermixed styles to convey their message to the audience.

The work is similar to this study in the sense that it analyses syntactic features and cohesive devices in the columnists’ use of English language in Nigerian newspaper. It is however different as this study compares the stylistic features in the writings of two columnists in a specific Nigerian newspaper – *The Guardian* newspaper. Also this work is analyzed at two stylistic levels, that is, syntactic features and lexico-semantic level.

In the study carried out by Mugair and Mahadi (2014) on ‘A Stylistic Analysis of “I have a Dream”’ they emphasized why style is important in a research quoting Alan Warner (1989) “style is a way of writing, a manner of expressing one’s thoughts and feelings in words. The same meaning can have different effects on its readers by being put in different ways”. The study looks at the famous speech of Martin Luther King as an example to analyze and discuss its stylistic characteristics. They discovered that it is not only the spirit of equality and liberty advocated in the speech but also its impressive style that contributes to its great success. The researchers analyzed the stylistic features in the speech and revealed that the author used more of metaphor and parallelism. They came to the conclusion that one’s style starts with the choice of words, namely lexical level, and then turns to the choice of sentence structure, namely syntactic level, before discussing the use of figure of speech, namely semantic level.



Their work is very relevant to this study as the choice of words of two columnists is examined and analysed. However, this work combines lexical and semantic level together, to form lexico-semantic level. In addition, the researcher also analyzes the syntactic features such as use of phrase, the use of clause, simple sentence, compound and complex sentences as used by the columnists in their writings in *The Guardian* newspaper.

Magar (2015) investigated the work entitled “The Language Used in Headlines in English Dailies”. The main objective of this study was to describe and analyze the language and graphological features of headlines. He selected eighty headlines as sample using non-random purposive techniques. He used observation as a research tool to collect the data. Finally, he concluded that blasting words are used maximally in the headlines of all the two newspapers published from Nepal. Regarding the use of the graphological features of headlines, headlines writers have used information words more frequently than opinion manipulators words in the headlines of all two types of newspapers. This researcher differs from Magar’s opinion because the focus here is on column articles while he worked on newspaper headlines. He investigated graphological features and language while this researcher examines or analyses lexico-semantic and syntactic features.

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is Systemic Functional Linguistics by M.A.K. Halliday. According to Halliday (1985), the grammar of a language is functional in the sense that it is designed to account for how the language is used. The major strength of the theory is the high premium it places on the recognition of the fact that every text, whether written or spoken, unfolds in some context of use. Thus, Halliday (1985) posits that language has evolved to satisfy human needs; and the way it is organized is functional with respect to these needs. The ways human beings use languages are classified in this theory in three broad categories known as Meta-functions and these are "ideational", "interpersonal" and "textual functions".

The term metafunction originates from Systemic Functional Linguistics and is considered to be a property of all languages. Systemic Functional Linguistics is functional and semantic rather than formal and syntactic in its orientation. As a functional linguistic theory, it claims that both the emergence of grammar and the particular forms that grammars take should be explained "in terms of the functions that language evolved to serve" (Halliday, 1994). While languages vary in how and what they do, and what humans do with them in the contexts of human cultural practice, all languages are considered to be shaped and organised in relation to three functions, or metafunctions. Michael Halliday, the founder of systemic functional linguistics, calls these three functions the *ideational*, *interpersonal*, and *textual*. The ideational function is further divided into the *experiential* and *logical*.

Metafunctions are *systemic clusters*; that is, they are groups of semantic systems that make meanings of a related kind. The three metafunctions are mapped onto the

structure of the clause. For this reason, systemic linguists analyse a clause from three perspectives. Halliday argues that the concept of metafunction is one of a small set of principles that are necessary to explain how language works; this concept of function in language is necessary to explain the organisation of the semantic system of language (Halliday, 1985). Function is considered to be "a fundamental property of language itself" (Halliday, 1985).

According to Ruqaiya Hasan, the metafunctions in SFL "are not hierarchised; they have equal status, and each is manifested in every act of language use: in fact, an important task for grammatics is to describe how the three metafunctions are woven together into the same linguistic unit" (Hasan, 2009). Hasan argues that this is one way in which Halliday's account of the functions of language is different from that of Karl Bühler, for example, for whom functions of language are hierarchically ordered, with the referential function the most important of all. For Bühler, the functions were considered to operate one at a time. In SFL, the metafunctions operate simultaneously, and any utterance is a harmony of choices across all three functions (Hasan, 2009).

The ideational function is language concerned with building and maintaining a theory of experience. It includes the experiential function and the logical function. The experiential function refers to the grammatical choices that enable speakers to make meanings about the world around us and inside us:

Most obviously, perhaps, when we watch small children interacting with the objects around them we can see that they are using language to construe a theoretical model of their experience. This is language in the experiential function; the patterns of meaning are installed in the brain and continue to expand on a vast scale as each child, in cahoots with all those around, builds up, renovates and keeps in good repair the semiotic "reality" that provides the framework of day-to-day existency and is manifested in every moment of discourse, spoken or listened to. We should stress, I think, that the grammar is not merely annotating experience; it is construing experience (Halliday, 2003).

Halliday argues that it was through this process of humans making meaning from experience that language evolved. Thus, the human species had to "make sense of the complex world in which it evolved: to classify, or group into categories, the objects and events within its awareness". In taking this position on the active role of grammar in construing "reality", Halliday was influenced by Whorf.

Halliday describes the logical function as those systems "which set up logical–semantic relationships between one clausal unit and another" (Halliday, 2003). The systems which come under the logical function are TAXIS and logico-semantic relations. When two clauses are combined, a speaker chooses whether to give both clauses equal status, or to make one dependent on the other. In addition, a speaker chooses some meaning relation in the process of joining or binding clauses together. Halliday argues

that the meanings we make in such processes are most closely related to the experiential function. For this reason, he puts the experiential and logical functions together into the ideational function (Halliday, 2003).

The interpersonal function refers to the grammatical choices that enable speakers to enact their complex and diverse interpersonal relations. This tenet of systemic functional linguistics is based on the claim that a speaker not only talks about something, but is always talking to and with others. Language not only construes experience, but simultaneously acts out "the interpersonal encounters that are essential to our survival" (Halliday, 2003). Halliday argues that these encounters:

range all the way from the rapidly changing micro-encounters of daily life – most centrally, semiotic encounters where we set up and maintain complex patterns of dialogue – to the more permanent institutionalized relationships that collectively constitute the social bond. (Halliday, 2003).

The grammatical systems that relate to the interpersonal function include Mood, Modality, and Polarity (Halliday and Mathiessen, 2004).

Halliday argues that both experiential and interpersonal functions are intricately organized, but that between the two "there is comparatively very little constraint". This means that "by and large, you can put any interactional 'spin' on any representational content" (Halliday, 2003). What allows meanings from these two modes to freely combine is the intercession of a third, distinct mode of meaning that Halliday refers to as the textual function. The term encompasses all of the grammatical systems responsible for managing the flow of discourse. These systems "create coherent text – text that coheres within itself and with the context of situation" (Halliday, 2003). They are both structural (involving choices relating to the ordering of elements in the clause), and non-structural (involving choices that create cohesive ties between units that have no structural bond). The relevant grammatical systems include Theme, Given and New, (Halliday and Mathiessen, 2004) as well as the systems of cohesion, such as Reference, Substitution, and Ellipsis (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). Halliday argues that the textual function is distinct from both the experiential and interpersonal because its object is language itself. Through the textual function, language "creates a semiotic world of its own: a parallel universe, or 'virtual reality' in modern terms" (Halliday, 2003).

A central notion of Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is 'stratification'. This implies that language is analyzed in terms of strata which are: context, semantics, lexico-grammar and phono-graphology. This study aims at analyzing the language styles of two newspaper columnists, Ray Ekpu and Gbenga Adebambo in their weekly articles in the Guardian newspaper.



## Data and Analysis

There are four basic literary styles used in writing – Expository, Descriptive, Narrative and Persuasive styles. These styles distinguish the works of different authors, one from another. It is the technique that an individual author uses in his writing and it varies from author to author depending upon one's syntax, word choice and tone. In this study, the writing styles of Ray Ekpu and Gbenga Adebambo were examined based on the characteristics or the hallmarks of each of the writing styles as reflected in their written articles in *The Guardian* Newspaper. Please find below the characteristics of each writing style:

### Expository Style

The characteristic of this style of writing is that it gives information to the reader. One of the primary objectives of every newspaper is to give vital information to the public. Hence, most journalists use this style in writing their news stories, feature writings and column writings. The two columnists under the study used expository style in their articles in *The Guardian* newspaper.

**Example 1:** Article 1 entitled “Shagari: Beacon of Service” published on 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2019 in *The Guardian* newspaper. Ray Ekpu writes: “When Alhaji Shehu Shagari, Nigeria’s first elected President, died on December 28 last year at the ripe age of 93, there was an outpouring of encomiums by Nigerians of different walks of life”. Ray Ekpu informed his audience first about the death of the former President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari which took place on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 at the ripe age of 93. This is information and facts to the readers. Many would not have known that the elder statesman had gone late in 2018 but through the article they were fed with the information. The columnist quoted the exact date when the incident occurred. These are characteristics of Expository style of writing.

**Example 2:** Article 4 entitled “Brambaifa’s burden” published on 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2019 in *The Guardian* newspaper. Ray Ekpu writes: “Besides, the budgeted money has never been fully paid to the Commission in any given year. Right now the Commission is said to be owed about N1.3 trillion naira by the Federal Government.” Ray Ekpu revealed to the public the actual budget of the Niger Delta Development Corporation (NDDC). In expository style of writing, facts and figures are laid bare for the public to see. In the same vein, the Columnist made another revelation known to the audience in the article. He writes: “Brambaifa is not a new face at the Aba Road Office of the Commission for he has been an External Board member of the Commission since 2016. Many readers would not know that the new Managing Director had had a stint with the Commission since 2016. The writer has brought it out for public consumption through the column article.

The second Columnist, Gbenga Adebambo also used expository style of writing as its characteristics were found in many of his articles in *The Guardian* newspaper. In his own style, he would make the revelation usually during the introduction. He would either explain the key words in the theme of the article or gave definition of special words used in the themes.

**Example 3:** In article 5 entitled: “Until You See The Purpose In Your Pain, It Will Remain Painful” published on 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2019 in *The Guardian* newspaper, Gbenga Adebambo writes: “There is a correlative nexus between PAIN and PURPOSE.” In his introduction, the Columnist informed his audience that there is a correlative nexus between pain and purpose. He wanted them to know that one does not just suffer pain for suffering alone, there is a reason hence the sentence – until you can see the purpose in your pain, your pain will remain painful.

**Example 4:** Article 12 entitled “Tiger Woods: Those That Give Up Don’t Go Up” published on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2019 in *The Guardian* newspaper. Gbenga Adebambo writes: “April 14 this year would go down as the day the world witnessed the greatest comeback in sports and entertainment industry. After serial scandals, failure in marriage, failure in investments, failure in securing sponsorship deals, failure in health and going down from No.1 to unseeded in gold ranking, Tiger Woods has finally done the unthinkable feat by winning his 5<sup>th</sup> Masters title, marking an incredible and improbable comeback from injury and personal hardship that ended a nearly 11 year long championship drought.” In this article, Gbenga Adebambo gave detailed information as well as facts that might be unknown to many people, including the fans of Tiger Woods. He stated the date of the lawn tennis competition, that is, 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2019. He gave the facts about the many setbacks that Tiger Woods had experienced before the victory of that day.

### **Narrative Style of Writing**

This style also has its own characteristics one of which is story telling. Some column writers indulge in telling stories of events or stories of incidents that occurred to someone at a particular point in time. It also involves giving background information and quoting dates of events or giving facts and figures.

**Example 5:** Article 3 entitled “Debate dodging” published on 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2019 in *The Guardian* newspaper. Ray Ekpu writes: “Historically, many Nigeria’s presidential candidates have been serial debate dodgers. In 1999, Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP refused to square up with Olu Falae of the APP/AD Coalition. In 2003, Obasanjo (PDP) refused to debate with Buhari of ANPP. In 2007, Umaru Yar’Adua (PDP) refused to debate with Buhari of ANPP.” Ray Ekpu narrated to his readers how past Nigeria leaders have been dodging political debates right from 1999 when the third republic began. He traced the incident right from Chief Olusegun Obasanjo when he refused to

engage Chief Olu Falae in a debate competition. This style validates the stories of the journalists and makes the readers to have faith in their write-ups.

**Example 6.** Article 5 entitled “INEC’s Shocker” published on 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2019 in *The Guardian* newspaper. Ray Ekpu writes: “In 2015, there were 68,833,476 voters while in 2019 the number had climbed to 84,004,084. In 2011 and 2015 elections, there were 20 presidential candidates each.” Ray Ekpu featured another characteristic of narrative style of writing in his writings by quoting dates and figures while narrating his stories. In the above example, Ray Ekpu gave the data of voters in 2015 to be 68,837,476. He compared it with the number of voters in 2019 which had gone up to 84,004,084. He also stated that in both 2011 and 2015, there were 20 presidential candidates each. Doing this frequently in almost all the articles selected for analysis in this study makes it the style he has adopted in writing his articles.

### **Persuasive Writing Style**

This writing style is used when a writer has the habit of convincing his readers about a particular issue. It also brings out justifications to back up actions. The style gives counsel or advice to the readers and it is used during argumentative write ups where the writer intends to win an argument. Gbenga Adebambo reflected virtually all the characteristics of Persuasive writing style in his selected articles. His articles usually focused on the youth and with this type of audience, he needed the ability to persuade or convince them to accept his opinion on the issues being discussed.

**Example 7:** Article 2 entitled “Why Are Degree Holders Poor?” Published on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2019 in *The Guardian* newspaper. Gbenga Adebambo writes: “My candid advice to graduates and students in institutions of higher learning is to think wide, deep and outside the box. Take volunteer jobs and don’t be afraid to navigate fields that are different from your field of learning.” Gbenga Adebambo was very direct in advising the students and graduates of higher institutions on what to do in order not to depend wholly on certificates but on what else they could do outside the four walls of the University. He considered himself as Coach or Mentor to the youth and he based his writing on persuasive note.

**Example 8:** Article 15 entitled “Mentoring Is The New Goldmine Towards Youth Empowerment” published on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2019 in *The Guardian* newspaper. Gbenga Adebambo writes: “Youths should stop looking for money and look for mentorship. You would need people that believe in you; people that invest in your dreams and goals, people that would bring the best and not the stress out of your life.” Gbenga Adebambo manifested these characteristics again as we have in persuasive writing style. He was very direct in the above example where he believes that youth needs mentors to guide them on the right path and not to be looking for money by all means. He advised and counseled them to invest in their dreams and passion and that, through

this, they would become responsible persons and money will eventually come through the right means.

### **Influence of Themes on the Writings of Ray Ekpu and Gbenga Adebambo**

From the articles of Ray Ekpu analysed for this study, it was discovered that the Columnist was fond of using short themes. He was consistently using this in all the articles. The themes were in phrase or group form.

**Example 9:** In Article 1 entitled “Shagari: Beacon of Service” published on 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2019 in *The Guardian* newspaper, the article was based on the 4-year administration of Shagari’s democratic rule. That theme necessitated Ray Ekpu to write extensively and reveal several information that majority of the readers might be hearing for the first time, since it was an event that occurred about 40 years ago. This is why the short themes would have great influence on the Columnist, hence the need to write volumes in order to give full and vital information to the audience in respect of the subject matter.

**Example 10:** In Article 4 entitled “The 9<sup>th</sup> Senate” published on 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2019 in *The Guardian* newspaper, Ray Ekpu’s theme here was also short and in phrasal form. Any reader seeing the theme – The 9<sup>th</sup> Senate – would like to ask: “What happened to them? What do they have for the nation in 2019? When will they be inaugurated?” and so on. These and other details would make the writer give background information and also narrate certain stories including the quotation of some facts and figures. This also tended towards narrative style of writing.

The second Columnist, Gbenga Adebambo, used long themes in all his articles analysed for this study. The themes were also in sentence forms and very long unlike that of the first Columnist, Ray Ekpu.

**Example 11:** In his Article 3 entitled “Habits You Don’t Cut Of Can Cut Your Life Short” published on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2019, Gbenga Adebambo’s theme looks advisory in nature. That is, if you don’t cut off certain habits, it could cut your life short. This is how Gbenga Adebambo’s themes influenced his writing towards persuasive style of writing.

**Example 12:** In his Article 14 entitled “Everybody Loves Growth: Where Can We Find Growth?” Published on 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2019, the theme is a combination of two sentences and self explanatory. To answer the question, the Columnist must reveal certain things which may not be known by the readers. For instance, Gbenga Adebambo said “He gave revelation of eight circumstances by which a person can find growth. He counseled his readers not to see failure as set-backs but as feedbacks. “Failure is simply an opportunity to begin again, this time, more intelligently.” This has influenced his writing towards expository style of writing.

## Conclusion

This study has done a stylistic analysis of the writings of Ray Ekpu and Gbenga Adebambo. The outcome of the findings of this study made it possible to realize the objectives of this work. First, it could be identified based on the analysed data of the selected articles that Ray Ekpu's writing styles are Expository and Narrative while the identified styles of writing of Gbenga Adebambo are Expository and Persuasive. Though the two of them are Columnists with the same newspaper organization – *The Guardian* – they do not have the same writing styles. Ray Ekpu being a journalist would need to give more information with facts and figures to his readers for validity and reliability purposes. Gbenga Adebambo who is a freelance writer and a Couch for the youths needs persuasive writing style for his unique and special target audience – the youths.

The study also revealed that the influence of themes on the Columnists' writing styles. Characteristic of Column writers is to keep readers in suspense probably the reason for Ray Ekpu's use of short themes. His themes are usually short and catchy. It could keep readers on their toes to desire to read the articles in order to discover what the writer has in stock for them. Hence the influence it has on Ray Ekpu's writing style of Expository and Narrative styles. He would need to write volumes in order to unravel the mysteries. In all the articles analysed, Ray Ekpu had an average of 85 sentences. Gbenga Adebambo's themes were longer and in sentence forms. This may be to simplify its reading for his target audience who are majorly youths. Too much vocabulary and verbosity may make it impossible to achieve the goal of his writing to the youths. His themes were self explanatory and portray a writer trying to appeal or persuade his readers to take action on how to improve their lifestyle.

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