



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**COURSE CODE : JLS 824**

**COURSE TITLE : JOURNALISM PUBLICATIONS**

**COURSE GUIDE****COURSE CODE: JLS 824****COURSE TITLE: JOURNALISM PUBLICATION****COURSE TEAM :****Bolu John Folayan, PhD(UNILAG) (COURSE DEVELOPER AND WRITER)****Josef Bel-Molokwu, *PhD* (COURSE EDITOR)****Chidinma H. Onwubere (PhD) NOUN**

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## Introduction

**JLS 824** is a one-semester 3-credit-unit Course designed to equip you with knowledge and skills on writing advanced forms of feature writing.

It is assumed that you have acquired the rudiments of writing News and Feature Stories in previous courses. This Course will help you understand kinds of journalistic writing and how to write advanced and creative forms of features.

Try to refresh your knowledge of elements of feature writing such as having a feature idea, straight news features (usually short reports explaining the news behind the news) and giving a little more detail of the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How of news reports.

This Course is a step further to sharpen your feature writing skills – moving you from that elementary stage to specialized forms of journalism writing.

Be sure to understand the basic contents of each module before proceeding to the next because each module prepares you for the next. The Course is primarily to build your writing skill; hence you are to ensure that you do not handle the demonstrative self-assessment questions with levity.

### **What You Will Learn in this Course**

The aim of the course is to enable you to know the *theory* and *practice* of advanced feature writing, meaning that you should be able to write very good features after going through this course!

You may have learned in previous courses aspects of journalistic writing such as News Writing, Elements of Grammar, and Feature Writing. ***Journalism Publication*** takes you further into specialized or advanced forms of journalistic writing.

The Course provides answers to questions such as:

- What are Journalism Publications?
- What are the genres of Journalistic Writing?
- Why do journalists write for different purposes and in different styles?
- What are the distinguishing features of popular Nigerian journalist-writers?

### **Course Aims**

The major aim of the Course is to enhance the student's knowledge of feature writing and to equip the student with skills required to write specialized, literary and other forms of features (in addition to the traditional style of news feature).

### **Course Objectives**

At the end of the Course, you should be able to:

- Write generally good features.
- Carry out literary appreciation of feature articles.
- Demonstrate the skills to write to suit the purpose, context and the audience.

### **Working through this Course**

*Feature Writing* may not be an art. But *Advanced Feature Writing* definitely is. The difference between the writer who is able to write the ordinary or normal feature and the one who could write advanced forms of feature is akin to a carpenter and a furniture

maker/interior decorator. The former is okay so long as the woods are knocked firmly together but the latter is more interested in the finesse of the work. That is why the beginning of this Course will take you through some of the rudiments again. Once you have equipped yourself with the necessary tools, the remaining task is all about choices – just like painters, who use different mediums to attain the same effect.

We recommend that you study a Module per month or a Unit per week in order to effectively understand the contents.

The self-assessment exercises at the end of each unit will not be graded, but they help you ascertain your knowledge-gain, hence you should take them very seriously. I will strongly advise you to do the exercises *before* you begin the next unit. Remember, this is a practical course.

At the end of every unit, there is also a tutor-marked assignment which you must carry out. In doing your assignments, you are allowed to use information and materials contained in your textbooks, reading and study units as well as other references to broaden your viewpoint and provide a deeper understanding of the subject or topic.

### **Course Materials**

Major components of the Course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study Units
3. Textbooks
4. Assignment File
5. Presentation

The above components will be provided by NOUN. In some cases, however, you may be required to obtain them from the bookshop. In case you have problem in obtaining your materials, you may contact your tutor.

### **Study Units**

There are 21 study units in this course. These are:

#### **Module 1**

- |        |                                     |
|--------|-------------------------------------|
| Unit 1 | Kinds of Journalism Publication     |
| Unit 2 | Basic Tools of Journalistic Writing |
| Unit 3 | Basic Steps in Journalistic Writing |
| Unit 4 | Kinds of Feature Articles           |

#### **Module 2**

Unit 1 The Traditional/Conventional Technique

Unit 2 The New Journalism Technique

### **Module 3**

Unit 1 News Features & Profile Features (Conventional Style)

Unit 2 Expose & Do-It-Yourself Features (Conventional Style)

Unit 3 Literary & Opinion Features (Conventional Style)

### **Module 4**

Unit 1 Literary & Opinion Features (New Journalism Style)

Unit 2 Expose Features (New Journalism Style)

Unit 3 Sports Writing

### **Module 5**

Unit 1 The Expressionists/Exemplifiers

Unit 2 The Literary Writers

Unit 3 The Narrators/Entertainers

Unit 8 The Logical Positivists/'Definers'

### **Module 6**

Unit 1 Common Feature Writing Errors (Grammar)

Unit 2 Feature Writing Tips (Form and Style)

Unit 3 Enhancement of Feature Articles

Each unit is accompanied by a one or several self-tests which are drawn from the materials you would have gone through. The tests are designed to keep you abreast of what you have studied through the course materials.

### **Textbooks and References**

Adeniyi, Olusegun (2005). *The Last 100 Days of Abacha*. Lagos: The Bookhouse Company.

Awoyinfa, M., and Igwe, D., (2003). *The Art of Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines*. Lagos: McDee Communications.

Callihan, E.L. (1999). *Grammar for Journalists* 8<sup>th</sup> edition. Texas: Chilton Book Company.

Okoye, I., (1998). *Feature Writing: Theory and Practice*. Lagos: Mic Pac Ventures Ltd.

Pharr, Donald and Buscemi, Santi V., (2005). *Writing Today: Contexts and Options for the Real World – brief edition*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Strunk, Jr., William and White, E.B. (1979). *The Elements of Style* 3rd edition. New York: Macmillan Publishers.

Uyo, Adidi. (2005). ‘Lecture Notes – The Philosophy of Communication’, Lagos: Department of Mass Communication, University of Lagos.

Uyo, O. Adidi. (2006). ‘Rite it Right. Lagos: Diamond Publications Ltd.

Wolfe, Tom. (1980). *The New Journalism*. London: Pan Books Ltd.

### **Presentation Schedule**

The presentation schedule included in your course materials is to guide regarding dates for the completion of tutor-marked assignments and how you can attend tutorials. Keep in mind that you are required to submit all your assignments by the due dates. Keep pace with the schedule and ensure you do not fall behind in your work.

### **Assignment File**

The Assignment File included in your Course Materials provides the details of the work you are expected to submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtain for these assignments will count towards the final mark you obtain in this course.

### **Assessment**

There are two aspects of assessment in this Course: the tutor-marketed assignments *and* the written examination.

You are required to submit your assignments to your tutor for formal assessment as scheduled in the Assignment File. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30 per cent of your total course mark. You will also be required to sit for a final examination at the end of the course. Your score in the works you submit to your tutor represent 30 per cent while your score the final examination represents 70 per cent of your total course mark. Note that the Self-assessments questions are meant to refresh your memory on what you learnt in a particular unit and will not be graded. But the assignments at the end of each unit will be scored by your tutor.

### **Tutor-Marked Assignment**



There are 21 tutor-marked assignments in this course. When you have completed each assignment, send it to your tutor. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline given for the assignment. If, however, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor before the assignment is due, to discuss the possibility of an extension.

The best five (i.e. the highest five of the 21 scores) will be counted for you. The total marks for the best five (5) assignments will be 30 per cent of your total course work.

### **Final Examination and Grading**

The *Final Examination* in JLS 824 will be a written test of three-hour duration and carries 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self-testing, practice exercises and tutor-marked tasks you would have gone through. It is better for you to cover all areas of the Course to make a good success in the examination.

Once you are through with all the Units, run through them all over again. Then, run through the conclusions and summaries severally. Finally, practice again the self-assessment and tutor-marked questions in all the Units. The essence of having a Tutor is to guide you, so feel free to seek his or her advice from time to time.

### **Course Marking Scheme**

Below is a highlight of how you will be scored for the Course:

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Marks</b>
Assignment 1-21	21 assignments; best five marks of 20 count @ 10% (on the averages) = 30% of the course marks
Final Examination	70% of overall course marks
Total	100% of course marks

### **Course Overview**

The table below is a summary of the Modules and Units for the Course, the number of weeks you should take to complete them and the number of assignments you are to do.

#### ***Course Modules and Units***

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Title of Work</b>	<b>Duration (Week)</b>	<b>Assessment ( at the end of Unit)</b>
	<i>Course Guide</i>		

<b>MODULE 1 –Introduction</b>			
1	Kinds of Journalism Publications	1	Assessment 1
2	Basic Tools of Journalistic Writing	2	Assessment 2
3	Basic Steps in Journalistic Writing	3	Assessment 3
4	Kinds of Feature Articles	4	Assessment 4
<b>MODULE 2- Journalism Publication Genres</b>			
1	The Traditional/Conventional Technique	6	Assessment 6
2	The New Journalism Technique	7	Assessment 7
<b>MODULE 3- Writing the Feature Story (Conventional/Traditional Style)</b>			
1	News Features & Profile Features	8	Assessment 8
2	Expose & Do-It-Yourself Features	9	Assessment 9
3	Literary & Opinion Features	10	Assessment 10
<b>MODULE 4 – Writing the Feature Story (New Journalism Style)</b>			
1	Literary & Opinion Features	11	Assessment 11
2	News Features & Profiles	12	Assessment 12
3	Expose Features	13	Assessment 13
4	Sports Writing	14	Assessment 14
<b>MODULE 5 – Analyses of the Styles of Some Leading Nigerian Journalist-Writers</b>			
1	The Expressionists/Exemplifiers	15	Assessment 14
2	The Literary Writers	16	Assessment 16
3	The Narrators/Entertainers	17	Assessment 17
4	The Logical Positivists/'Definers'	18	Assessment 18
<b>MODULE 6 – Advanced Writing Skills Workshop</b>			
1	Common Feature Writing Errors (Grammar)	19	Assignment 19
2	Feature Writing Tips (Form & Style)	20	Assignment 20
3	Enhancement of Feature Articles	21	Assignment 21

### How to Get the Most from this Course

One of the great advantages you have as a student of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is that you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace and at a time and place that suit you best.

Well of course, you do not see your lecturer face-to-face as in traditional university education system. Nevertheless, you can still 'interact' with him or her if you diligently follow this Course Guide. Sometime along the line too, you will get to see your Tutor and ask him or her questions related to any aspect of this Course!

The study units tell you what to do from time to time and ask you questions a visible lecturer could have asked. The Reference List provides additional resources that you could learn more from about the Course. However, where you do not seem to understand specific topics or concepts, note them and be sure that you use the opportunity of the Tutorials to thrash it out with your Tutor.

The objectives of the course are to help you understand what you should be able to do on completion of the unit. Therefore, you should carefully understand the objectives before you go through each unit. Also, when you are through with each unit, go back and check whether or not you have achieved the course objectives.

## Reading Section

Before you take off with Unit 1, do the following:

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly
2. Organise a study schedule for yourself. There are probably other Courses you are studying alongside this Course. Leaf through the topics and sub-topics and allot appropriate time for each Unit using the Schedule provided earlier, as guide. In doing this, note the assignments you have to do and a lot adequate time so that you will not have to be 'carrying over' your assignments.
3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything to stick to it. There is hardly anything meaningful one can achieve in life without discipline. Self-discipline is a very important requirement every distant learner to succeed.
4. Keep the key contacts of your tutor once you are given: name, phone numbers, e-mail etc.
5. Leaf through the entire 21 topics (units) to give you a rough idea of what to expect in the entire course. This may take you one or more hours.
6. Work through the unit. Read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
7. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for every unit is given in the 'Overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will find it helpful to read both the study unit you are working on and your set books on your desk at the same time.
8. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow.

9. At the end of the unit, go back to the objectives and be sure that you have achieved the objectives stated before you go to the next unit.
10. As soon as you submit your assignment to your tutor for marking, begin with the next unit. Do not wait until the tutor gives you back your assignments or scores before proceeding to the next unit.
11. When the tutor returns your assignment, go through it checking his or her comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also on what is written on the assignment.
12. Review the entire units after completing the course (and your assignments) in preparation for the final examination. Be sure that you have achieved the unit objectives and course objectives.

### **Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials**

There are 12 hours of tutorials provided by NOUN in support of this Course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials. You will also be given the contact details of your tutor as soon as you are allocated to a tutorial group.

Your tutor will mark your assignments and comment on them. He or she will keep watch on your progress and will be ready to assist on any difficulties you might encounter e.g. when you do not understand any part of the study units or/and the self-tests or exercises or when you do not understand your tutor's comments on the assignments you had submitted.

Make up time to attend all tutorials. It is a great opportunity for you to clarify any areas you do not understand; where questions (most of which you should have noted during your studies) would be instantly answered. Don't forget also that you will get to interact with fellow students and the Tutor at the tutorials – another excellent way of learning. You will find it very helpful if you prepare questions list before attending tutorials and ask those questions during the tutorials.

### **Summary**

If you follow this Course Guide and carefully study through the 21 units, you should be able to easily answer the following questions:

1. What are the kinds of journalism publications? What are the basic tools of journalism writing? What are basic steps in journalism writing? What are the types of feature articles?
2. What are the characteristics of Traditional Features and the New Journalism?
3. What are the elements of style in feature writing?
4. How can I actually (or practically) write good features from the beginning through the body and give them good ending?
5. What are the different or unique attributes, including styles, of some of Nigeria's popular journalist-writers?

If you can successfully answer the above questions, do your assignments well and on time and participate meaningfully in your tutorials (especially, asking your Tutor to put you through where you do not seem to understand very well), then you are most likely to score a very good grade in the Course.

In addition to that, you would have acquired an important skill that every educated person (lawyer, administrator, businessman, scientist, professor, teacher, engineer, politician, journalist etc.) must have – being able to write well. Can I say, 'Congratulations'? No, I'd rather wait until we are through with the Course and see how you have fared. Ok?

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**COURSE TITLE: JOURNALISM PUBLICATION**

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**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATION****MODULE 1 - INTRODUCTION****UNIT 1 - KINDS OF JOURNALISM PUBLICATIONS****1.0 Introduction**

As a journalism student (or post graduate student in another discipline taking a journalism course) you know too well that you should read newspapers and magazines. I am also sure that in the last couple of days you have read several newspapers and may be one or two magazines. Could you recall the kinds of things you read in those newspapers and magazines?

That is the essence of this Unit: To identify various kinds of journalism publications primarily to distinguish them from the typical feature article. It is very necessary to do so as a way of giving good grounding for you and also because there is no consensus by professionals on what a 'feature article' (our main subject) is.

**2.0 Objectives**

After this interesting Unit, you should be able to:

- Characterize contents of newspapers and magazines by purpose.
- State the relative importance of the different kinds of publications
- Distinguish all of these publications from the feature article.

**3.0 Main Content****3.1 Defining the Feature**

Consider the following definitions by distinguished journalists and mass communication teachers:

“The thing we call feature is fairly elastic and it can accommodate anything from news analysis, commentary to a full length magazine article. It may

relate to ideas or to persons or to institutions or to objects – whatever it is, a feature story should provide a great deal of information about that thing, a great deal of explanations and should provide a great deal of context. I think any piece of writing that does this can qualify to be a feature.”

- **Dr. Olatunji Dare**, (journalism teacher and former member, Editorial Board of *The Guardian*)

“Speaking technically, a feature story is any story which is not strictly news.”

- **Sola Odunfa**, former Editor-in-chief of *Punch*, now Bureau Chief of British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC, in Nigeria.

“Feature writing in a broad term covers the presentation of opinion and fact as distinct from presentation of news... it embraces the whole range of writing which is outside news reporting.”

- **Lateef Jakande**, veteran journalist, publisher and former president, International Press Institute.

“A feature article is about an event or personality or an issue that is not treated as hard news. Its purpose is generally to shed more light on an event, giving more background information that you would not have been able to include in the hard news report or give more information about something that ordinarily would not feature as hard news.”

- **Dr. Delu Ogunade**, journalism teacher, University of Lagos.

“Let me say what a feature is not, then I would probably be able to answer what a feature is. A feature is not news story, a feature is not a commentary, a feature is not an opinion, a feature is not an editorial, and a feature is not a letter.”

- **Richard Ikiebe**, former editor, *Newswatch/Daily Times*.

“A feature is part of the writer’s poetic licence to pick the angle of the story, to give it a perspective, to shape the facts available to him to reflect that perspective...although features are based on facts, the presentation of those facts reflects the writer’s personality but such personality should not intrude into the story.”

- **Mike Awoyinfa & Dimgba Igwe**, publishers/editors.

From the above definitions, you should be able to have a rough idea of what a feature story is.

The last two definitions (Ikiebe's and Awoyinfa's/Igwe's) are most helpful to us regarding this course – Journalism Publications. From those definitions, we know for instance that there are so many publications in the newspapers and magazines apart from news stories and 'features'.

We also know that a feature is best identified with the manner or style of presentation, rather than the facts. Features are given priority management by newspapers and magazines because features constitute about 70 per cent newspaper text and over 85 per cent of magazine text.

In other words, a letter to the editor could be written as a feature; an editorial could be written as a feature, even news could be written as a feature: what classifies them as features (and not letter, opinion, editorial, etc.) is the *presentation*. You may want to publish an article in the newspaper using the normal essay and letter-writing style you were taught in the primary and secondary schools many years ago, or you could decide to choose the *feature style*.

### **3.2 Commonest Kinds of Journalism Publications**

Below are the commonest kinds of publications you can find in newspapers and magazines.

#### **1. Letters to the Editor/Opinion**

Virtually all newspapers and magazines devote pages to publication of letters written by their readers. Such letters could be the readers' contributions to information/issues previously published in the newspaper/magazine or other media, or could be a voicing of his or her opinion of an issue.

Letters as usually indicated as 'Letter to The Editor' and are usually short. They are almost always nothing more than the personal view of the writer, with or little argumentation. They could also be social demands from organisations and political leaders (probably because that is the easiest and most effective access to them). They are usually published close to the editorial opinion page. Telephone text messages sent to the editors may also be classified in this category of journalism publication. Example:

**'Gov Alao-Akala, save Beere from darkness'**

*Beere community in Ibadan has been in total darkness for about three months now and despite the fact that the State House of Assembly has approved three transformers: one 500KVA for Beere and two 300 KVA for Labiran, Alekuso and Isale-Alfa, we are yet to see the installation of the transformers.*

*We have also made many appeals to the PHCN office at Ring Road, as well as Monatan District, but all to no avail. We are, therefore, calling on Governor Adebayo Alao-Akala to come to our aid.*

***Richard Atolade,***

***Ibadan.***

***(Nigerian Tribune, Monday August 10, 2009)***

Opinions are longer, more analytical or articulated ‘letters to the editor’.

## **2. Editorial**

An editorial is simply the opinion or view of the newspaper or magazine. Such an opinion could be written by the editor(s), the publisher or any other person(s) assigned to write it but it is strictly-speaking to his or her opinion but that of the medium.

Every standard media organisation has an editorial board, comprising usually some of its editors and informed members of the society. The board meets to deliberate on issues of public interest and gives a definitive stance. The majority view at such a conference becomes the opinion of the newspaper. Even when the assigned writer does not agree with such stance, since it is the majority view, he or she is supposed to write the editorial from that consensus stance. The aims of such publication are to sway public opinion, clarify facts, correct errors, persuade, or simply to note milestones in history. Editorial writers are called lead writers. Example:

### ***Bauchi 911***

*It was a massacre, but it was not carried out by terrorists. It was not 9/11; the carnage did not happen on September 11, 2001. Terrorists did not spear a sky-scraper with planes and entomb 3,000 people.*

*The Bauchi massacre, which was perpetrated on May 28, 2009, was bloodless. There were no corpses, but the 911 men and women involved may soon begin to suffer cash convulsions. They have been kicked out of their jobs. Their dismissal was a bolt from the blue sky of Bauchi.*

*The 911 people were employed by the Governor of Bauchi State, Alhaji Isa Yuguda. They were all his personal aides. Twenty-three of them were special*

*advisers and 41 were employed as senior special assistants. The governor also had 265 special assistants and 582 personal assistants.*

*Some ignorant people have said that governor employed aids that could only laze all day. All the aids, according to our information, were fully employed. For instance, one aide shined the governor's sandals, another helped the governor to slip the sandals on while a third aids buckled the footwear.*

*LONDON scandal sheets expressed foolish shock when it was revealed that a servant put toothpaste on Prince Charles's brush. Did they expect the heir to the British throne to perform such a difficult and undignifying task?*

*GOVERNOR Yuguda is a more important man than Prince Charles and one of the aides may have been employed to brush his teeth.*

*There is no truth in the rumour that the latest addition to Governor Yuguda's harem, a daughter of President Umaru Yar'Adua, ordered the dismissal of the 911 aids. It is true that there is now a personnel Ground Zero in the Bauchi Government House, but the lady is not interested in appointment architecture. After all, her husband cannot dismiss any of her aides, who may number a mere 500.*

*(Nigerian Tribune Editorial, 2009)*

### 3. News.

Of course, you should be able to readily distinguish news from other editorial matter. It is the presentation of something new or unusual. The important thing to note (which many people get wrong) is that journalistically, it is the *presentation of the new information* that is called news, not the information being presented. News is the *report* of what is news. A boy may have killed his father since last month it is just a piece of information. When that information is *reported* (on radio, TV, the Internet, magazine, newspaper or any other news media, it then becomes news. News are topical, current and written in a format that indicates the Ws and H (Who, What, Where, Why, When and How) all arranged in the best way the journalist thinks will convey its immediacy. This is the reason news stories are given prominence (prominently displayed), speedy treatment (there is nothing as stale as yesterday's news) and are published in the present tense. Example:

### ***FG probes plot to kill S/East gov***

*By Taiwo Adisa, (Group Politics Editor)*

*There was a lot of frenzy in the intelligence circles at the weekend, as The Presidency was said to have directed the agencies to institute a probe into an indication that a South-East governor has been marked for elimination by political opponents.*

*The indication emerged as top level sources were said to have linked the plot to kill the governor to an ex-governor of one of the South-East states, who was said to have been aggrieved at recent developments in the state.*

*A source said that the affected governor was at the Presidential Villa last week when he was confronted with reports that he might have been marked for elimination.*

*But a source said that the allegations of assassination attempt must have been taken too far, as it was believed that the former governor and the incumbent governor were merely involved in an 'ordinary' political game.*

***(From Nigerian Tribune, 2008)***

#### **4. Features**

A feature is an essay or news report that is more detailed than a news report, and one in which the writer's personality reflects in the report without intruding. The traditional definition of regarding everything outside news reports as 'features', is not correct. It is the style of presentation, not the content that makes a publication to be referred to as a feature. Thus, today, we have news features, photo features, informercials (commercial features), etc. The feature style does not follow any strict writing format, apart from the rules of grammar. Even sometimes, feature writers do break the rules of grammar. On the contrary, in traditional journalism style, the writer must follow a set of writing rules, apart from those mandated by the grammar of the language of communication

#### **5. Advertisements**

An advertisement is an editorial or graphical presentation in the newspaper that is paid for by an identified sponsor. Advertisements and editorial contents compete for newspaper and magazine pages in cut-throat format simply because of their symbiotic value. Advertisers put ads in newspapers and magazines because they believe people would read them. But media organisations need adverts to run the business profitably. Advertisements written in feature style are often referred to as *advertorial* (newspapers and magazines) and *informercials* (TV/radio).

## 6. *Photographs and Graphics*

Graphics and photographs constitute over a third of the editorial pages of most newspapers and magazines. It could be photographs of news items also being reported or of those recently reported. Photographs could be presented as straight news or published as photo-features. When Argentine star footballer Lionel Messi, distributed six defenders to score a goal for his club several years ago, various newspapers tried to describe the feat. The picture of the ball going past the goal keeper was published around the world. But a features editor merely used six photographs to capture how the ace striker went past each of his opponents and put beautiful captions (photo feature or photo story) and it became an instant hit.

## 7. *Sports*

Sport stories and features constitute a special kind of journalism publication. The sports writer does more than just report events ‘as it is’ (objective). In addition to informing their readers, they also entertain, impress and ironically are given some liberty (traditionally) to be subjective. For instance, a sports reporter could write: “The Super Eagles did us proud yesterday by beating the Black Stars of Ghana 5-0 in a World Cup Qualifier”. Here the reporter put himself or herself as participant and not an observer in the event being reported. In some other instances, subjectivity is not so obvious. A general reporter would report how a football encounter went (objective) but most sports reporters would highlight the areas that they believe the reader would love. He or she does not follow the normal straight-jacket news format. Often, he or she is also at liberty to make judgments while reporting (all of which are not allowed in normal news writing. In addition, sport writing is technical because every sport has its own language. Sports publications could come in form of letters, features, news analysis and news.

### 3.3 Self-Assessment Questions



1. List the kinds of publications that could be found in a national newspaper apart from news reports.
2. Give two different definitions of features.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

The starting point in advanced feature writing is to know the kinds of publications that could be found in the newspaper or magazine. This is because each kind has peculiar characteristics that affect how they are written.

Feature writing can be applied in all kinds of journalism publications – it is the arrangement of information and facts such that the writer’s personality reflects but does not intrude in the article. Mastery of language and style are very important

#### **5.0 Summary**

Scholars and journalists have different definitions of feature writing. Most of them consider features to be any publication in a newspaper/magazine besides news. This can be misleading - for instance, photographs, cartoons, advertorials and editorials would qualify as ‘features’.

The better approach to define the feature article comes from looking at style of presentation. All forms of journalism publication could be written ‘feature-style’.

Kinds of publications in newspapers and magazines are letters, editorials/opinions, news, news analysis, news feature, photographs and graphics, advertorials/supplements, adverts and sports.

Take a Monday edition of a national newspaper of your choice and identify in that publication: letters, features, editorials, opinions, photo-story, advertorials and sports reports, stating the pages on which they are published.

#### **6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment**

1. Define and explain feature writing
2. Describe seven (7) kinds of publications that could be found in a national newspaper or magazine.

## **7.0 References/Further Reading**

Pharr, D., and Buscemi, S. V., (2005). *Writing Today: Contexts and Options for the Real World*, brief edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Uyo, O. Adidi (2006). *‘Rite it Right*. Lagos: Diamond Publications Ltd.

**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATION****MODULE 1 - INTRODUCTION****UNIT 2 - BASIC TOOLS OF JOURNALISTIC WRITING****1.0 Introduction**

Be he or she a broadcaster or print media reporter, the journalist cannot do without words. The basic raw materials for the journalism profession are words. Words have connotative (original) and denotative (inferred) meanings. Words also have structures in which they must appear, to convey the right meaning. Words also have mnemonics (sounds) which a skillful writer can explore to further add beauty and effect to whatever he or she is writing. For example, look at the sentence *“You have to be bold to get to where you want to be in life.”* Someone who has the mastery of words can do some ‘wordsmith’ to make it sharper, shorter and impactful: *“If you don’t dare, you can’t get there.”*

**2.0 Objectives**

This Unit is to enable you:

- Refresh yourself of rudiments of writing – if a farmer does not have or does not know how to use simple implements like the cutlass, hoe: how can one expect him or her to be able to use a trowel or a tractor? You should be able to state the rudiments of writing at the end of the Unit.
- Demonstrate that all writing has rules and norms and that a good understanding of the rules and forms of grammar will fundamentally determine how well you can write.

**3.0 Main Content**

Journalistic writing that is advanced moves from the realms of elementary rules of grammar to manipulating those rules without breaking them. A skillful writer can put a comma (,) where the rule says a full-stop (.) should be and he or she may not have broken any lexical order.

E.g. *“Our President is Bad. Bad. Bad. Bad. And unless something is done urgently, he would get ‘badder’. Or how can you imagine the president of a country say ‘the economy was badder last year than this year. It’s a blue murder of the Queen’s English.”*

In the above example, having the first ‘bad’ starting with capital letter B, the full stops after the three ‘bads’ and the word ‘badder’ clearly broke the ordinary rules of grammar. But this writer has successfully broken those rules without being found guilty, simply through creativity and skills. But someone who does not know the rules cannot do such a thing. You will therefore need to refresh yourself of what you had learned in previous courses such as Use of English and Writing for the Media as a foundation for this course. Let us go through some key tools of journalistic writing.

### 3.1 Vocabulary

All the words that exist in a particular language constitute the vocabulary of that language. All the words that a writer knows of a particular language constitute that writer’s vocabulary of that language. The first major step in good writing is therefore to build a rich vocabulary in the language you intend to communicate. Every language has enough words to describe people, things and places but these differ in the accuracies with which they describe what they are supposed to describe. For example, in English Language ‘careful’ could be used as a synonym for ‘thoughtful’, depending on the context of the expression. E.g. ‘Bolude is always thoughtful before she commits herself to requests.’ ‘Bolude is always careful before she commits herself to requests.’ But really, ‘careful’ and ‘thoughtful’ do mean exactly the same thing. If a writer in English Language has only the word ‘careful’ in his or her vocabulary and not ‘thoughtful’, he or she will be limited to use ‘careful’ all the time. But the writer that knows several words that express similar meanings would all things being equal, write better. This is because he or she has a larger pool of words to pick from. She can decide to pick one word based on its simplicity. He can pick another one because he is surer of its spelling than the other synonyms. She can even pick a word for its poetic value. When a writer has inadequate words to use, he or she is automatically limited in some ways.

However, one does not need to memorize the entire dictionary of a language to write well in that language. Vocabulary is built gradually. There are basic words and expressions you must know of any language to build your sentences. After that you can begin to look for substitutes for those words and expressions. When you

come in contact with new words, look them up in the dictionary and use them. With time, they form part of your vocabulary.

A writer who writes for a fixed audience (like a school teacher who handles only Primary Six Class permanently) would need more limited vocabulary than a journalist who not only writes for different sets of people (highly educated, averagely educated, young, old etc.) but on different subjects (politics, science, economy, technology, property, sports etc.). The journalist would certainly require a richer vocabulary to communicate effectively. The journalist primarily writes for the audience. When he or she writes for teenagers about the economy, the writer must step down to use vocabulary within the communication experience of teenagers. But when the same writer writes for economists he or she must use the words that convey meanings in the realms of the economy. For the teenagers, you could write “*Prices of goods and services are jumping*” and for the economists, you could at liberty to write “*There is a galloping inflation.*”

When a writer does not know enough words to use, he or she is often tempted to use *wordy phrases*. The writer, in this situation, converts spoken words into written words and make up phrases from the bits and pieces of his or her vocabulary. His/her essay would not be tidy as it would too wordy. Sometimes too, the writer is forced to manufacture words that do not even exist. Below are examples:

<i>Wordy phrase</i>	<i>Simpler equivalent</i>
In the event that	if
A large number of	many
It is clear that	clearly
As a matter of fact	truly
Due to the fact that	because
Irregardless	regardless
Ethused (she is enthused about it)	enthusiastic (she is enthusiastic about it)
Did not pay attention to	ignored
He was not very often on time	he usually came late
Whether or not	whether
First and foremost	first
Small in size	small
Future plans	plans
Visible to the naked eye	visible

As a rule, do not use words you are not sure of their meanings; have two good dictionaries that you may use as references and remember that as journalist, you are a communicator – so use words that would best convey the exact meanings you intend the audience to have.

### 3.2 Rules of Grammar

Every language has rules about how words change their form and combine with other words to make sentences. These rules differ from one language to another but most writers who can speak (or write in) more than one language need to be careful so as not to use the rules of one for the other. I used to hate grammar lessons. Hearing terms such as conjunctions, adverbial phrases, modifiers, and clauses used to irritate me as a rookie writer. But I later realized that without knowing the basic rules of grammar, I would never be able to write skillfully. I therefore took time to study those basic rules. I found them very simple to understand and that when you have understood them, you can actually manipulate those rules to express yourself distinctly. Let us look at English Grammar a little bit more closely then.

#### *Sentences*

Grammar is simply *the correct use of words in sentences*. What then is a sentence? A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought. A sentence is made up of words and words are classified as parts of speech. Grammar has two main divisions: the parts of speech and the sentence. There are eight parts of speech; nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunction and interjections.

One simple way to write good sentences is to always remember that a group of words which expresses a complete thought has a *subject* and a *predicate*. The *subject* is what is spoken about. *The predicate* is what is said about the subject. E.g. Austin Okocha scored the winning goal. What is the action spoken about? It is 'scoring a goal' – hence the predicate. Who scored the goal? Okocha. Okocha is thus the subject.

Writers run into sentence problems mainly because they do not know the rules that govern the parts of speech and because they could not properly organise their thoughts. The commonest kinds of sentence errors are as follow:

*Fragmentary sentences:* The writer uses a phrase to constitute a sentence. A **phrase** is a group of two or more associated words not containing a subject and a predicate and therefore does not make a complete statement and is only a part of a clause or a sentence. (A **clause** is a group of related words that form part of a sentence). *The President has appointed new defence chiefs. Generals W.O. Onye, T.H. Okar and B.A. Bamigboye are.* The first sentence has a subject (President) and a predicate (the verb appointed), hence is a complete sentence. The second sentence is fragmented. It could stand alone (it has a subject but no predicate) and should have been linked to the first sentence as a clause: *The President has appointed new*

*defence chiefs - Generals W.O. Onye, T.H. Okar and B.A. Bamigboye.* Sometimes a clause can stand alone (independent clause) but a subordinate or dependent clause can never stand alone in a sentence and must be linked with the main sentence.

*Run-on sentences:* This kind of sentence error occurs when we cannot properly punctuate our sentences. Example: *The armed bandits came in and shot into the air and took my brother by the armpit before they asked of where the money was and then slapped me. I was not myself as I was very afraid, I wondered what if I was shot, what if they killed my brother and I decided to cry out, thief, thief, however, no help came.* In the above example the writer muddled up his thoughts by using too many ‘and’ and ‘comma’ (,) instead of full stops (.). A comma blunder occurs when a writer runs together two independent clauses or sentences with only a comma between them or without any punctuation mark at all. Callihan (1962) in his classic work *Grammar for Journalists* recommends five ways to avoid writing run-on sentences: 1) By using a semicolon in place of the comma; 2) By using a coordinate conjunction like *and* following the comma; 3) By creating distinct sentences ending with full stops; 4) By using a phrase in place of the initial independent clause; 5) By using a subordinate clause in place of the independent clause. Examples:

*Dry climates being good for tuberculars, doctors often advise patients to go to New Mexico* (phrase)

*Because dry climates are good for tuberculars, doctors often advise patients to go to New Mexico.* (subordinate clause)

*Sentence Classification:* When you make up a sentence, that sentence is likely to be in one of the following classes: **declarative sentence** (you state a fact or a possibility, e.g. Ten ministers may be dropped in the impending cabinet change in Ondo State); **interrogative** (you ask whether something is a fact or not a fact, e.g. Is President Barack Obama an American?); **imperative** (you give a command or an order or make a request e.g. Don’t take Niger-Delta militants for granted); **exclamatory** (you express a strong or sudden feeling or emotion, e.g. Oh my God! The boat is going to capsize!)

Any of the above sentence classifications could be formed as *simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences or compound-complex sentences*. A simple sentence consists of one independent clause which contains one subject and one predicate which expresses one complete idea, thought or meaning. *E.g. The plane fell into the ocean.* The compound sentence consists of two or more connected simple sentences. Each simple sentence that forms part of a compound sentence is an independent (or principal) clause. *E.g. Frequent clashes now occur*

*in oil-producing areas, and the way out of the problem is to engage the militants in dialogues.* Here, the coordinate conjunction ‘and’ helps to connect two independent clauses. The Complex sentence consists of two or more clauses which are not coordinate (of equal rank). This is the second most commonly-used sentence structure in journalism (after simple sentences). One of the clauses – and not more than one – is independent. There is only one independent clause and as many dependent clauses in a complex sentence. In journalism, the easiest way to put two ideas into the same sentence is to make one of them subordinate to the other in a complex sentence. E.g.: *President Umaru Yar’ Adua was the first to enter the hall to greet the arrested militants when the ship conveying them from the creeks berthed at Apapa.*

*President Umaru Yar Adua was the first to enter the hall to greet the arrested militants* (independent clause)

*When the ship conveying them from the creeks berthed at Apapa* (second idea, i.e. subordinate to the independent clause; it depends on the first idea to give it meaning).

The compound-complex sentence is made up of a compound sentence (composed of at least two independent clauses) and one or more dependent (subordinate) clauses. In journalistic writing, compound-complex sentences are not encouraged because it usually entangles the reader.

### 3.3 *Parts of Speech*

Many journalists and public relations professionals do not like being ‘bored’ with parts of speech – after all they are not ‘English Language majors’. But, as Callihan has noted, “until he becomes skilled in recognizing the parts of speech unerringly, the journalist cannot hope to write correct English consistently.” (1968:28).

Let us quickly run over the eight parts of speech in the English Language:

#### *Verbs*

This is the journalist’s and PR practitioner’s most important ally of the eight parts of speech. A verb is the word which gives life, purpose and action to the sentence. In fact, without a verb, the group of words cannot be a complete sentence. Journalists and speech writers love verbs because they ‘power’ their sentences. Instead of “Eagles 5, Brazil 0”, a sports reporter would write: “Eagles thrash Brazil 5-0”. Another reporter could prefer: “Eagles wallop Brazil 5-0”. A strong verb helps to dramatize action. A verb can be so strong and valuable that it can stand on its won as a sentence, if it is in an understood subject. We may simply define a verb as *a word that denotes action, being or a state of being*. Examples:

Action	-	FG <u>declares</u> public holiday
State of being	-	The gods <u>are</u> dead
Being	-	The reporters <u>were</u> absent at the press briefing



*Nouns*

There are four kinds of nouns:

Common nouns: Ordinary names of common objects such as beings, animals, places, towns, villages, schools.

Proper nouns: Names of particular persons, places and things. E.g. Dr. A. Adewale, Lagos, Snake Island.

Abstract nouns: Names of conditions and qualities, e.g. beauty, speed, bravery.

Collective nouns: Names of collectives or groups of persons, animals or things, e.g. team, jury, crew, mob.

*Pronouns*

These are words used in place of nouns: Classifications with examples:

Personal Pronouns

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	I	we
Possessive	my, mine	our, ours
Objective	me	us

Second person

Nominative	You	You
Possessive	Your, yours	your, yours
Objective	you	you

Third person

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	
Nominative	he	she	it	they
Possessive	his	her, hers	its	their, theirs
Objective	him	her	it	them

Other types of pronouns are:

Distributive pronouns (each, either, neither) are used to separate groups into individuals.

Interrogative pronouns (are used in asking questions) e.g. *Who* took away the television?

Relative pronouns (are used to connect a dependent clause to an antecedent/noun in another clause) e.g. Joseph Yobo is the player whom we must nominate as captain. Joseph Yobo is the player who should play the penalty kick.

*Adjectives*

Adjectives enable the writer to express conceptions that nouns alone do not convey. Journalists who use the 'new journalism style' (Unit 5) are fond of adjectives.

Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns; they either describe or limit the meaning of the words they modify. E.g. Sickly governor, 63-year-old Iyonu Rukerudo, died yesterday at St. Nicholas Hospital, Lagos.

Interrogative adjectives (whose, which, what) are limiting adjectives used before nouns in questions.

Numerical adjectives (describe numbers) e.g. fifth anniversary; three days after the bomb.

The commonest form of adjectival error in writing is from failure to use the correct 'degree of adjective'. Adjectives have three degrees: Positive degree (used when no comparison is indicated, e.g. She is a beautiful girl). Comparative degree (used to compare two persons or things, e.g. She is more beautiful than Seyi). Superlative degree (used when more than two persons or things are compared, e.g. Tolu is the most beautiful of the three sisters.)

### *Adverbs*

These are words which give more information about a verb. E.g. The applicants arrived early for the interview although the Head of Human Resources came late. In journalistic writing adverbs that stand on their own are better than ones created by adding the prefix *ly* (use *first* instead of *firstly*, for example). You can use *more*, *less*, *least* before the positive form of the adverb to make comparisons e.g. He is less likely to commit such fraud.

### *Prepositions*

Prepositions are used to link or connect words in two ways: relating a noun or pronoun (the object) to another word in the clause or sentence; showing what relation exists between the two words. E.g. The shirt on the hanger is the official uniform of ABC securities, *where* Tom works. Other examples of prepositions are: in, at, to, for, between, toward, concerning, per, under, until, upon, via, through, inside, behind. Prepositions can also be used in form of phrases. If the word has no object, it is not a preposition but an adverb. E.g. The little boy fell down the hill (preposition)

The little boy fell down (adverb)

### *Conjunctions*

Conjunctions are used to connect two words or two phrases or two clauses of equal rank, or that join a dependent (subordinate) clause to a word in the independent (principal) clause. Coordinate conjunctions connect words, phrases or clauses of equal rank – *and*, *or*, *nor*, *but*, *yet*, *for*. They are used for contrast, choice and inference. Collective conjunctions are used in pairs or series – *both* – *and*; *neither* – *nor*; *either* – *or*; *not only* – *but also*; *though* – *yet*; *although* – *yet*; *if* – *then*.

### *Interjections*

They are words or phrases used to express strong feeling or emotion or to attract attention. E.g Goodness! Alas! Halleluyah!

## **3.4 Principles of Composition**

The fourth important tool you will need to have handy – whatever kind of journalistic writing you want to engage in – is one related to the principles of composition. Styles of presentation (feature) could differ from writer to writer, but the principles of composition are the same, more or less. These are:

### *Choose a suitable design*

Good writing is usually preceded by good planning. The writer must have a sketch of the shape he or she wants the article to take. Beginners are encouraged to make an outline but experienced writers do not use outlines. Nonetheless, they still organize their thoughts on the write-up in their heads before writing.

### *Paragraphing*

The paragraph serves all literary work. Whether it is long or short, a paragraph should be able to hold together the account and make reading and understanding easy for the reader.

### *Editing*

There is hardly any writer whose first draft is so neat he or she does not need to take a word or two out or reframe sentences. Editing is the quality control process through which all materials for publication are professionally treated to ensure accuracy, clarity, balance, coherence, fairness, simplicity, conciseness, objectivity and consistency of style. Editing is not limited to correcting spelling, grammar and punctuation errors. Good editing helps the writer to achieve brevity (Keep It Simple and Short, KISS); it ensures clarity (removes ambiguities); structures the article for better understanding; corrects spelling and grammatical errors and checks the logical sequence of the entire piece.

After your first draft, check again to see if pronouns agree with antecedents, if colons are placed when introducing a list, if missing commas have been inserted, or superfluous commas have been removed; if semi-colons are used to form clauses; does each have a subject and a verb? Look out for problems of style – did you use strong active verbs as much as possible? Did you remove jargons and clichés? Are the quotes punchy enough or are they not even necessary? Did you vary the lengths of your sentences or are they in loose forms? Are your prepositions overloaded? Are your spellings correct and quotes properly attributed?

### 3.5 *Personality of the Writer*

According to Strunk and White (1979), “every writer, by the way he uses the language, reveals something about his spirit, his habits, his curiosities, and his bias.” The curiosity of the writer, his or her power to observe, analytical skill, sense of humour and life experience all contribute to the quality and nature of his or her writing. The rules and norms of grammar are guidelines for expressions and writing would be boring if everyone writes exactly the same way. The beauty of writing is that, within the framework of grammar, we let our person run through our writings. Our choice of words and the structuring of those words constitute out *styles*. When Nigerian statesman Chief Obafemi Awolowo died several decades ago, many Nigerians wrote memorable tributes. One of the most outstanding tributes was written by former warlord, Chief Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, who wrote: “*Chief Obafemi Awolowo was the best president Nigeria never had.*” We can re-write the same sentence in other ways: *The president Nigeria never had was Chief Obafemi Awolowo; Nigeria never had Chief Obafemi Awolowo as president, etc.* All of these conformed with the rules of grammar but they do not have the poignancy of expression of the one given by Chief Ojukwu. Chief Ojukwu’s statement drew from his own personality, experience, perception of the man Awo and so on. Sometimes, some writers are more popular for their reasoning ability than their eloquence or writing skills. Good writing cannot be detached from philosophy. Philosophy involves thinking critically, examining in details and reasoning logically.

### 3.6 *House Style*

Apart from the general rules of grammar and syntax, the writer is also guided by *house styles*. A media organisation’s own body of regulations on how writing should be done is known as the *house style*. Some house styles are limited to grammatical issues while others go as far as indicating how to present facts, etc. Write-ups that do not follow established guidelines will very rarely get published by a media establishment.

### 3.7 **Self-Assessment**

1. Write three examples of *interrogative, declarative* and *simple sentences*.
2. Re-write the following text in short sentences, using clauses and phrases that you think are necessary.

*It was a massacre, but it was not carried out by terrorists. It was not 9/11; the carnage did not happen on September 11, 2001. Terrorists did not spear a skyscraper with planes and entomb 3,000 people. The Bauchi massacre, which was perpetrated on May 28, 2009, was bloodless. There were no corpses, but the 911 men and women involved may soon begin to suffer cash convulsions. They*

*have been kicked out of their jobs. Their dismissal was a bolt from the blue sky of Bauchi.*

3. Identify the parts of speech in the paragraph you have re-written.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

A writer cannot move from elementary writing to advanced forms of writing if he or she does not have the basic tools of writing. The hallmark of good writers is in their abilities to creatively apply the rules of grammar to their interpretation of the issues that they write on.

#### **5.0 Summary**

The basic tools of journalistic writing are: vocabulary (knowledge of words and their meanings; grammar (correct usage of words in sentences), principles of composition, house style and understanding his or her own personality.

A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought. Ability to form appropriate sentences that agree with rules guiding parts of speech is the most fundamental skill to possess in writing. Once vocabulary and grammatical skills are acquired, what remains is a matter of style – the writer’s personality, experience, reasoning and analytical abilities telling on his or her writing.

#### **6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment**

1. With examples, explain the importance of the following tools in journalistic writing:
  - *Principles of Composition*
  - *Parts of Speech*
  - *Vocabulary*
  - *Personality of the Writer*
  - *House Style.*
2. Write out the meanings of the following from any standard English dictionary:
  - Nouns
  - Pronouns
  - Verbs
  - Adverbs
  - Adjectives
  - Conjunctions

- Interjections
- Prepositions.

### **7.0 References/Further Reading**

Pharr, D., and Buscemi, S. V., (2005). *Writing Today: Contexts and Options for the Real World*, brief edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Uyo, O. Adidi (2006). *'Rite it Right*. Lagos: Diamond Publications Ltd.

**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATIONS****MODULE 1 - INTRODUCTION****UNIT 3 - BASIC STEPS IN JOURNALISTIC WRITING****1.0 Introduction**

Writing an article in the newspaper or magazine starts from getting an inspiration on what to write about. The writer then proceeds to researching the subject, choosing a topic a focus, writing the article and doing final editing. Every writing – whether of an editorial, a letter to the editor, an advertorial, a news analysis or a feature story - takes this process. The degree of attention the writer pays to each step, as we shall see as we progress through this Course, varies depending on the style of the writer and subject matter. It is pertinent to do an introductory overview of these basic steps before we begin to look at advanced forms of journalistic publications.

**2.0 Objectives**

This Unit is to enable you to:

- State the systematic procedures through which all forms of writing take place
- Explain the processes the articles you find in newspapers and magazines may have gone through – and through which your own article will mostly likely pass.
- Demonstrate that there is much more involved in skillful writing than the *actual writing*

### 3.0 Main Content

#### 3.1 The Steps to Journalism Publications

##### *Getting an Idea*

Awoyinfa and Igwe (1997) insist that getting an idea to write about is a simple task: “Good feature materials are everywhere. You can write on any subject under the sun. Ideas for feature stories are just like the sea. They never dry. Ideas are everywhere. Ideas can come from anybody or anything. Ideas would surely come. They can come in an avalanche. As French writer Victor Hugo puts it, *a stand can be made against invasion by an army; no stand can be made against invasion by an idea.*”

While the above assertion is true, the authors may have over-simplified the challenge of getting ideas from which to develop journalism publications. It is not just enough to think of writing about anything. A writer should be able to write something that has meaning to his or her readers. You just saw a rat run across the room. True, that could be an idea for a feature story or a news story. But will it be of interest to people who put down their hard-earned income to buy your magazine or newspaper?

Getting an idea is not really the problem. Ideas can come by inspiration (the thought suddenly lands in your brain, maybe while you are driving or taking a shower) and can come while you read articles, books and historical accounts written by other writers. For instance, if you read an opinion by Mike Awoyinfa on the national football team, you may immediately want to disagree with him. That’s an idea from which a journalism publication can emanate. The cover story of *TELL* magazine could be so well-written that you think the editors need a pat on the back. That’s another writing idea. You could pick up conversations by other people and an idea could spring up to do a magazine cover story on the subject of that discussion. In other situations (as in most newspapers and magazine establishments), journalists can hold brainstorming sessions (known as editorial conference) to hazard ideas from which stories could spring up.

##### *Research*

The writer will be able to determine the worth of an idea for an article by researching in to that idea. What distinguishes a journalist or public relations



practitioner from other kinds of writers is that journalists and public relations practitioners are communicators. They write to inform and educate, primarily. Sometimes, they write to entertain too. But the primary role objective of a journalist/PR professional is to share meaning. This is the reason that communicators hold on to a creed that says ‘facts are sacred’. Even in writing opinions, the writer must be sure to have painstakingly researched the subject. Take an example: Government outlaws night parties in Lagos State. You just heard about this new policy and an idea comes to you to write against the new measure. You need to thoroughly research the subject, even when it seems to you that you know so much about the subject. What questions do you think your reader would want answered on the subject? Are your data on the matter infallible? The outcome of your research would either strengthen or weaken your position on the issue. Whichever effect it has will only strengthen your write-up.

When people speak of having read ‘informed opinions’ or ‘informed features’ in a newspaper they are talking about the factuality and logicity of the opinion. Situations often occur when a writer would strongly hold a view but drop such view after just a little research on the subject. There was a time members of the editorial board of a national newspaper wanted to write against fuel price increase. The consensus at the first editorial conference was that the fuel price increase was wrong, insensitive and unnecessary. But because it was the practice of the board to research every editorial idea, research was conducted on the subject and the board had to drop its original view. Instead of writing against fuel price increase, in fact, it ended up writing in favour of it. When you write an article without prior in-depth research, your article will lack steam.

A story that is exclusive to a media organisation is called a scoop. Scoops help to sell publications and build solid integrity for the medium. Most scoops result from diligent research. Award-winning investigative journalists would confess to you that they never set out to win honours while doing the stories that won them acclaim. Rather, they stumbled on astounding facts on which they anchored their stories. We talked about an idea of a rat that ran across the room as a possible feature story idea a while ago. On the surface, that sounds as a mundane idea. But in writing, you rarely can dismiss any idea until you have done a little investigation.

Through your investigation, you could discover incredible things that your readers would want to know.

### *Choosing the Topic*

After initial research, the writer narrows his or her perspective to a topic. What is it that is most interesting about rats from that research? What is it that is most dangerous, most unusual, extra-ordinarily unique about rats? Often in newspaper houses, editors do assign topics to reporters or writers. It could be an independent topic on its own or a sub-topic derived from a general topic that the editorial team intends to do a major report on. Narrowing down to a topic could necessitate additional research, given the fact that, now, the focus of the article is clearer. If preliminary research is properly done, focal areas from which topics could emerge would be apparent and the writer would then be able to proceed to the next stage.

### *Writing the Article*

All articles have three broad parts – the Introduction, Body and Conclusion. How each of the three parts is shaped is a matter of style. But there is hardly any publication that does not have an introduction, body and conclusion, even when the entire piece is just one paragraph. In other words, introduction, body or conclusion could be implied. Beginners are encouraged to make an outline of how the article would look like. Writers who do not make pre-writing outline do make such outlines in their ‘heads’.

What comes first, next and thereafter in the structuring of the article depends on many things – house style, the subject, style of the writer, the audience etc.

Generally (all things considered), the introduction (called intro or lead) must hook the reader to want to read on. Some writers begin writing with the lead while others prefer to write it after the first draft of the entire story. A writer whose first intro attempt sails through (without him or her having to re-work it) is a genius. In practice, you may spend an hour battling with your intro (which should not be more than 30 words, any way), and write the body of the same report within 20 minutes. Once you can hook the reader in the first two paragraphs, he or she is likely to follow you through the story. When intros are long, winding and verbose, they put off readers and the article becomes a thorough bore.

We will examine together common types of lead in subsequent units (direct address, description, question, staccato, parody, quotation, suspense, news feature and literary allusion leads.)

The body, though easier to handle than the intro and conclusion, also requires great attention. Why do readers drop out of stories (stop reading further at some point while going through an article)? In most cases, this is because the writer could not continue to hold-on the reader. It could be that the body has too many long sentences or generally unorganized thoughts. Often too, readers ‘drop out’ because the writer is verbose and, out of confusion, the readers flip the pages in search of more interesting topics.

Not all articles have formal conclusions. But you will find skillful writers make implied conclusion towards the end of the article as part of the body. Where formal conclusions are necessary, it should be pungent and must leave an indelible impression, the nugget of entire piece powerfully impacted on the reader.

### *Re-writing*

A good writer is his or her own best critic. Read the piece all over again. Apart from checking the accuracy of spellings, tenses and general grammatical structures, looking over your script gives you the opportunity to select more appropriate words. The most appropriate words may not come while making the first draft. You may now want to add a few adverbs or remove too many adjectives. Again, this an opportunity to try to experience what your reader would experience coming across the piece. So, try to feel what the reader will feel and see if you are enjoying the piece or not. Consider the following intros to a news feature:

#### *First draft:*

Mrs. Sarah Doe, the Managing Director of Unlimited Resources Bank, is considering resignation as a final option following the failure of her efforts to revive the ailing bank.

The debt profile of the bank has increased from N100 billion to N150 billion in the past three years and top managers are resigning for greener pastures in competing banks in what observers have

described as ‘trip to Armageddon’. Ten managers resigned last week alone.

*2<sup>nd</sup> draft:*

These are not the best of times for the Managing Director of Unlimited Resources Bank, Mrs. Sarah Doe. In the past few weeks, she has had accepted ten resignations from the bank’s best managers, and now her own resignation letter is under way.

With a huge debt of N150 billion, gripping economic melt-down and panic withdrawals by concerned customers, the Unlimited Resources Bank boss actually has a limited time to act and save the ailing bank.

*3<sup>rd</sup> and final draft:*

These are not the best of times for the Managing Director of Unlimited Resources Bank, Mrs. Sarah Doe.

Ten resignations from the bank’s best managers, protests from angry depositors, a huge bad debt of N150 billion and pressures on her to resign are sure signs of bad times for the Banker of the Year 2006 winner.

The Unlimited Resources Bank boss has a limited time to save the ailing bank.

Just last week, the Central Bank issued a warning that all banks....

***Comments:***

*The first intro is fair. But every intro (even the third final draft) can be re-worked to make it better. Putting the name of the object first is an unnecessary emphasis on the Who. The two long sentences in the first intro make the intro drab. In the second draft, the writer tried to overcome this problem by interpreting the intro with the words “these are not the best of times...” but he found that the paragraph*

*was still not short and sharp enough. In the final draft he decided to suspend the reader's interest in 17 words, making the reader to want to read the second paragraph. In the second paragraph (of the final draft), he dramatizes the problem the MD had been coping with to sustain the reader's interest.*

*Notice that between the first and third drafts, the writer saved a lot of unnecessary words. All the three intros are grammatically okay but could be better in structure and style. The writer's word surgery led to "the debt profile of the bank has increased from N100 billion to N150 billion" being replaced with "a huge bad debt of N150 billion"; "pressure on her to resign" replaced "her resignation letter is under way" – the latter is longer and in the passive tone; "concerned customers" gave way for "angry customers" – the latter is stronger. "For greener pastures in competing banks in what observers have described as 'trip to Armageddon'" was taken out of the third draft without any important thing missing. Notice also how the writer introduces contrast in the final draft by bringing in a new fact – the troubled MD was Banker of the Year only few years ago. His creative choice of words "MD of Unlimited Resources Bank" having "a limited time to act" also powered the contrast that the writer tried to convey to the reader. Finally, this writer ensured that one paragraph leads the reader to want to read the next, and so on.*

The Editor (or Features Editor) is only interested in making minor changes in a piece. He or she has no time to spare to correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation, delete clichés and redundancies, adjust misplaced qualifiers and then help you to re-write the script. He or she would rather spare the troubles and throw the piece in the waste basket. Sure, the editor is likely to make some corrections on an article (to conform to house style, sharpen communication, avoid libel or factual error etc.), but in the Mad House known as Newsroom, time is so precious to everyone that re-writing is every editor's nightmare. Spend time re-writing and editing carefully until you come out with a copy that is satisfactory to you – and which you think will impress the Features Editor and ultimately the reader. If time permits, sleep over your story or give it to a colleague to read. Then read it all over again.

Although the task of writing titles for stories is traditionally that of the Editor or Sub-Editor, in contemporary feature writing, you are expected to title your story. The reading of an article starts from the headline and a good intro takes the headline into consideration. The headline and the story are inseparable. The intro should transit smoothly from the headline. For

example, suppose the headline of the intro in ‘Draft 3’ was “Bad times for URB Boss, Mrs. Doe”. Would that not have made the intro ineffective? The intro “These are not the best of times for...” would be superfluous because the headline had let the cat out of the bag.

### **3.2 Self-Assessment Questions**

1. List and explain the five major steps in developing articles for publication in newspapers and magazines.
2. Where does a feature writer get ideas for stories from?

## **4.0 Conclusion**

Every journalism publication follows five major steps – having an idea, researching the idea/subject, choosing a focus or topic, writing, re-writing/editing and submission of final draft for publication. The amount of time and skills devoted to each of these stages will reflect in the quality of the final output.

## **5.0 Summary**

The first step in journalism publication is to moot the idea of what to write about. This could come from intuition or inspiration, what other writers had done, instruction from a boss, advice of a colleague, observation of the writer or through brainstorming.

The writer then carries out further research about the subject – library research, interviews, participant observations, etc. with a view to collecting unassailable facts, since the primary role of journalism is to inform. Through research, slants or areas of focus would emerge and it becomes easier for the writer to now pick his or her topic or theme.

After this stage, it might be necessary to do little more research (having now known the focus). The next stage is to write the introduction (lead), the body and the conclusion. The intro should arrest the reader, the body should sustain the interest and the conclusion should let out the reader with a strong impression.

## **6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment**

1. Outline in detail the steps you would take to publish an article in *The Sun Newspaper*, any article at all.

2. The final stage is the re-write or editing stage. Every word must play a significant role in the entire piece.
3. Look for a news item reported by three different newspapers. Write out the headline and first three paragraphs of each publication and compare them in terms of *length or number of words, impact, style and clarity of meaning*.

## **7.0 References/Further Reading**

Callihan, E.I. (1999). *Grammar for Journalist*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition. Texas: Chilton Book Company.

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**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATIONS****MODULE 1 - INTRODUCTION****UNIT 4 - KINDS OF FEATURE ARTICLES****1.0 Introduction**

Have you forgotten our definition of Feature Story in Unit 1 of this Module? We started this Module by explaining the divergent views of what feature stories (or simply ‘features’) are. The differences in definitions occur for two reasons: one, the academic definition of a feature story is not the same with what obtains in practice; two, the application of the term has changed over the years.

In theory, a feature is any publication in the newspaper or magazine that is not straight news report. In practice, we know that this cannot be true. Does it then mean that cartoons, advertisements, supplements and pictures are features?

Let us recall some of the definitions we considered in Unit 1 of this Module.

**Richard Ikiebe**, former editor, *Newswatch/Daily Times*:

“Let me say what a feature is not, then I would probably be able to answer what a feature is. A feature is not news story, a feature is not a commentary, a feature is not an opinion, a feature is not an editorial, and a feature is not a letter.”

**Mike Awoyinfa and Dimgba Igwe**, Publishers/Editors of *The Sun*:

“A feature is part of the writer’s poetic licence to pick the angle of the story, to give it a perspective, to shape the facts available to him to reflect that perspective...although features are based on facts, the presentation of those facts reflects the writer’s personality but such personality should not intrude into the story.”

In *practice* what really defines a feature story is the *presentation*. Modern journalism permits the *feature style* for virtually all forms of publications – letters, opinions, editorials, advertorials, photographs, news reports, news analysis, and interviews. A *feature* may therefore be defined as *the style or form of journalism presentation which permits the writer to allow his or her personality to reflect in the presentation of facts and information but without his or her personality intruding into the story*. In other forms of



writing, for example in straight news writing, the writer must follow a format. A news format places emphasis on the ‘What’ and ‘When’, then ‘Why’ comes next in that order (although this can be varied occasionally). A straight news format rarely has time for telling the why, and if it does, it is rarely detailed. Letters to the Editor, Editorials, Analyses can also be written using the ‘formatted’ style – What is it? Why are you proposing the view? But a feature permits the writer to do-it-his-own-way. You can be as detailed as you want. You can start from the how and end up with the what. You can describe and explain (interpret) what you are writing on without necessarily injecting your personal views.

## 2.0 Objectives

This Unit is to enable you to:

- Identify the different kinds of feature articles in journalism
- Explain the kinds of features most suitable for different story ideas and choose them appropriately.

## 3.0 Main Content: Classification of Features

### 3.1 *Classification by Subject-Matter/Object*

Awoyinfra and Igwe (2002) and Okoye (1998) have classified features based on the subject-matter or object of the publications i.e. what the writer is writing about/the intent of the write. They offer the following categories:

#### 1. News Feature

A news feature is a feature story which has the elements of news (timely, unusual, odd, informative, prominent etc.) It is in fact an extended news report which seeks to add more flesh to the accounts already offered by straight news. In terms of timing, it is usually a bit less timely (comes a day or two after a big news break; but some very good news media organisations release news features same day as major news-breaks occur.). Mostly weekly publications adopt the news feature approach because dailies and the broadcast media have the advantage of ‘telling it first’ but weeklies and monthlies have the advantage of ‘telling it better’. Some editors refer to this kind of feature as ‘news behind the news’ – they use it to explain the ‘How’ and ‘Why’ which straight news reporters do not usually have enough time to indicate in their reports because they have to rush to let their readers hear the gist from them first. The most

natural curiosity of a human being is ‘what’ or ‘who. What has happened? What is going on? What is going to happen? And when something has happened, the person naturally would want to know when and when why.

*“Who died? Oh! What a loss! When did he die? Ah! Just yesterday? Oh my God! What killed him? Tell me, how did it occur?”*

Journalism follows this natural man’s sense to nose for information. Straight news is preoccupied with the answering the first questions, news features try to answer the next set of questions and other features tend to answer the latter sets of questions.

The intent of a news feature writer is to add details to an event earlier reported and explain how the event occurred. Like news, a news feature should be timely and should not be too detailed.

## 2. Profiles

Also known as personality story, a profile is a form of feature which centres on a person that the writer considers as interesting enough to make interesting reading (Awoyinfa & Igwe, 2002). It can be on anybody: poor, rich, famous, infamous, hero, villain, good, wicked, etc. What motivates the writer to do a profile story is the appeal that the story could generate. There must be something of interest or of value or to learn from a typical profile story – not just an attempt to re-run someone’s Curriculum Vitae.

Notes Okoye (1998):

*“People enjoy reading about other humans whose contributions help in shaping the world and those whose stories make them stop and think...either for their prominence or human interest value; profiles on personalities attract considerable readership in the local and international media.”*

Profiles can also be done on organisations, occasions, places and dates.

## 3. Exposé

Also known as investigative feature, this is a feature story aimed at pointing out something wrong in the society e.g. examination malpractices, sexual harassment, cultism, election rigging, prostitution, fraud and drug trafficking. The writer is usually involved as a participant observer in an expose. He or she sees the events with his or her naked eyes and perceives the event with his or

her five senses but as an undercover. Confidential or classified information also serve as rich sources of doing exposé features.

#### 4. Travelogue

A travelogue is an account of a trip to a place which the writer thinks would be of interest to his or her readers. A travelogue literally takes the reader on an excursion and lets him or her see, feel, smell and hear those things that the writer saw, felt, smelled and heard when during his/her trip. The objective of a travelogue is to inform and also entertain the reader.

#### 5. Do-it-Yourself

The primary intent of the feature writer here is to educate or enlighten the reader. It teaches readers how to perform certain tasks. For example, it could be how to manage your income, how to obtain a visa, how to decorate the home for Christmas or how to make a special kind of soup. Do-it-yourself features are often technical and the writer must really have correct and adequate information about the topic in order not to misinform the readers.

#### 6. Reviews and Specialized Features

These are also known *literary features*. They are a specialized form of features on arts and culture. They are critical analyses of books (fiction, non-fiction, biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, textbooks, commentaries, reference works and other directories); musical productions (audio, video, music recordings, orchestra performances, etc.); dramatic performances (plays and dance, cultural festivals); cinema productions (films, documentaries, premieres, etc.); broadcast media programmes and artworks (paintings, sculptures and crafts). Like do-it-yourself features, review features require good knowledge of the subject matter. You cannot attempt to review a book that you not read or a film you have not watched. In addition, the writer must have enough background on the subject matter in addition to the particular work being reviewed. For example, a feature writer who intends to review Wole Soyinka's *Trials of Brother Jero* would need to not only have reasonable information about Wole Soyinka but also to have read some of his other works. It is a highly specialized form of writing. But unlike the typical literary writing, reviews are written to inform. They are written to inform and entertain general readers not

particularly for a literary audience. They should not be too technical or abstract, therefore. Other technical writing in journalism such as Science Reports, Energy and Environment, etc., commonly referred to as ‘specialized features; may be grouped in this category.

#### 7. Human Interest Stories

These are features about oddities, life, ordeals and such other stories that touch the heart in some ways. Examples: how a dog saved his blind boss from armed robbers; the boy who draws with his mouth; the chief who has 156 wives. Humanizing a story is really different from the ‘human interest story’ itself. When a story or subject is dry, a writer can flesh it up by winding up the human psyche in it – that is humanizing a story. On the other hand, a human interest story is on its own interesting, unusual, touchy and entertaining. Such stories are usually the soft sides of life highlighted in an interesting format. The objective of a human angle feature is to bring out information and entertainment from unusual aspects of life.

8. Sports Features: This category (although not highlighted by Okoye, Awoyinfa and Igwe and most other books on feature writing) is nonetheless a very distinct kind of feature. Sports journalism is mostly feature-styled and it has its own unique language and form. Unlike other forms of journalistic writing, sports writing permits editorializing (The reporter may put its own subjective views in the report). In addition, in sports writing the writer is often both a reporter and a judge. He or she not only reports the outcome of a football match, for example, but also rates the performance of players, the mistakes of coaches or the referee, etc. Sports writing is also specialized and technical – knowing the rules and politics of games being reported is as important as the event being reported. The typical sports feature is a complex combination of narrative, descriptive, analytical, news, opinion and exemplificative writing written from an objective-subjective perspective. It stands on its own as a sub-genre of journalistic writing.

### ***3.2 Classification of Features by Style/Form***

A more convenient and helpful way to classify features is by style/form. In practice, as noted earlier, any form of journalism publication can take the conventional or features approach. A letter to the Editor is not a feature, but can be

written as a feature. A newspaper editorial is not a feature but can be written as a feature. Even pictures can be published as photo-features. We have seen advertisements in newspapers that are advertorials (advert features). Thus, in practical contemporary journalism we cannot really classify features by subject. The better way to classify features is by form/style.

Examine the following editorials by a national newspaper:

### **INEC Should Take Responsibility This Time**

The simmering debate on electoral violence in parts of the country after the governorship elections has not abated nine clear months after the elections. This should be a source of worry for Nigerians.

The defence offered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) or its justification for the spate of violence that has accompanied alleged monumental riggings during these elections is hardly cogent.

In many states, there have been over-voting, intimidation, killings and arson and one wonders if those truly want to serve the interest of the people would go to this extent to secure political mandate.

The INEC should no longer pass the buck. In the interest of advancing democracy in Nigeria, the electoral body should simply own up to its responsibility with a view to conducting a credible, acceptable election in 2011.

The huge wastage of the nation's resources on the farce called elections in this country can no longer be justified. INEC should take responsibility this time.

### **Iwuruwuru to the Answer**

In Yoruba language, *Iwuruwuru* translates "manipulations".

We are beginning to give serious thought to some insinuations that the names of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) chairman (Prof. Maurice Iwu) have some etymological value. The true translation of Mr. Chairman's last name appears to be in consonance with the Yoruba meaning of *Iwuruwuru*.

In many states, over-voting, intimidation, killings and arson were characteristic of the so called elections. Senators and governors-to-be march the streets with guns, charms and amulets, albeit to win

electoral votes. In whose interest is INEC conducting these elections, one may ask?

Election is not just about adding 2 and 2 *anyhow* to get 4 as INEC has done. It is about ensuring that *according to laid down rules* are followed. And when they are not followed, INEC should simply admit its failure with an apology to Nigerians and a resolute pledge to Nigerians to do the right thing next time.

The first editorial (INEC Should Take Responsibility This Time) was written in the traditional form while the second one was written as a feature. What distinguishes a feature therefore is the style or form of presentation, not the object or subject as far as modern journalistic writing is concerned. The following classifications would readily describe most forms of features:

1. Direct Address Features:

In this kind of feature, the writer addresses the reader as if he or she is talking to him or her. E.g.

You enter the gates of the palatial building and you cannot but adore the architectural masterpiece.

You step forward majestically as the waiter beckons to you to come over.

“You are Dr. Bolu John Folayan? He asked you in unmistakable French accent and he gave you a very warm handshake.

This form is very suitable for writing travelogues, reviews and exposés.

2. Descriptive Features:

Readers explore their imagination as they are reading, and descriptive details help make the subject matter become real for them. Note Pharr and Busceni: “Visual forms of expression – photography, painting, and film, to name a few – have the advantage of fully engaging one of our senses – sight – but they are still limited...description is a powerful strategy, one that allows the writer to exercise a great deal of control over the reader’s perception. In *Objective description* (common in the sciences and business) the writer is able to describe his or her subject

without including his or her own personal opinion. But in *Subjective description* the writers show personal connection to the subject.

3. Narrative Features:

Often described as the oldest form of human communication, the narrative is a chronological presentation of events in the order in which they occurred. They can be used for writing travelogues (e.g. ‘My first time in Paris’ and news features (e.g. ‘How Super Eagles won their 5<sup>th</sup> World Cup ticket). News reviews may be presented as a narrative feature.

4. Exemplification Features.

The term ‘exemplification’ is a coinage from the noun example. Exemplification features are features written with detailed examples. According to Pharr and Busceni (2005), exemplification has two distinct uses: one is an internal strategy, a way of providing concrete details to back up assertions and claims of every type... you will find out that you need to provide examples to develop paragraphs and essays written for many different purposes... the second use of exemplification is as an overall pattern for an essay...the writer explains and supports the thesis with examples drawn from his or her experience or research into a topic. *An In-depth feature is a kind of Exemplification feature.”*

5. Analytical Features:

They are features that are analytical in nature: the writer looks at all sides of an issue critically and brings about salient or important issues. They are also known as Interpretative Features. Many readers do not know what it means if interest rate of banks goes up from 10 per cent to 25 per cent. An analytical feature could present possible conclusions or a conclusion but it is not aimed at making the reader to toe a line of argument. It merely interprets the issue or topic, hence it is sometimes referred to as *interpretative feature*. All forms of journalism publications (reviews, letters, editorials, even news –as in ‘news analysis’) can be written as analytical features.

#### 6. Argumentative Features:

These kinds of features are similar to analytical features except that argumentative features tend towards persuading the reader to take a particular position, unlike analytical features. This form of writing is common in the writing of newspaper editorials. The argumentative feature is structured to persuade the reader to adopt a position.

#### 7. Human angle Features:

Various personality, people-based features may be grouped as human angle features because they tend to explore the personality of a thing, person or issue. Interview features (including when transcripts of interviews with people are published verbatim) fall into this category. The presentation of this kind of feature is to appeal to the psyche, personae or emotions of the reader.

#### 8. Classification Features:

These are feature stories in which the writer makes sense of a large subject by dividing it into smaller categories, each one consisting of similar items. It is a common style of features in magazines and weekend publications. The Editor comes up with a 'cover concept' and breaks it into discreet parts, by theme, by type, by appearance or by behaviour. A typical form of classification feature in the Nigerian mass media is 'the series' – continuous features in different editions of the same publication about the same issue or subject.

### **3.3 Self-assessment Questions**

1. List and explain six kinds of features using the subject-object classification.
2. Distinguish a travelogue from a narrative feature.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

The most practical way to classify features is by style or form of the features. Eight kinds of feature, using this classification, are: Direct Address Feature, Descriptive Feature, Narrative Feature, Exemplification Feature, Analytical Feature, Argumentative Feature, Classification Feature and Human Angle Feature.



## 5.0 Summary

There is no uniform definition of features by journalists. Traditionally, features are anything published in newspapers and magazines apart from news stories. In contemporary journalism, this classification is not very helpful. It is common now to have news stories written in feature formats (news features) and advertisements written as features (advertorials in newspapers and infomercials on radio/TV).

Using the subject/object classification, feature types are: News Feature, Profile, Expose, Travelogue, How-to-do-it-Yourself, and Reviews. When classified based on form and style of presentation there are eight types of features: Direct Address Feature, Descriptive Feature, Narrative Feature, Exemplification Feature, Analytical Feature, Argumentative Feature, Classification Feature and Human Angle Feature.

## 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Write an account of a memorable day in your life as a:
  - (i) Narrative Feature
  - (ii) Human angle Feature.
2. Write short notes on the following:
  - a. Direct Address Features
  - b. Descriptive Features
  - c. Narrative Features
  - d. Exemplification Features
  - e. Analytical Features
  - f. Argumentative Features
  - g. Classification Features
  - h. Human angle Features.
3. Give two examples of ideas that could be best written in each of the above feature forms.

## **7.0 References/Further Reading**

Awoyinfa M., and Igwe, D., (2003). *The Art of Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines*. Lagos: McDee Communications.

Okoye, I., (1998). *Feature Writing: Theory and Practice*. Lagos: Mic Pac Ventures Ltd.

**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATIONS****MODULE 2 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATION GENRES****UNIT 1 - THE TRADITIONAL/CONVENTIONAL TECHNIQUE****1.0 Introduction**

In a beginner's feature writing class, the student is taught the basics of writing, the tools of writing and how to write different kinds of features. Although this is an advanced writing course, going back to the basics keeps our memories of those fundamental beginnings fresh again, and we can now proceed from the meat to the bones.

One easy-to-learn writing good features is to confine one's writing to a particular kind of features. If you are taking a direct address feature approach, that is the approach for the entire piece. Similarly, a narrative runs from the beginning to the end as *a narrative*. Skillful journalistic writing however comes in form of blended essays. You have to skillfully combine the features of narration, with exemplification, human angle, classification, analysis, argumentation and description in a single piece sometimes (as the need arises). The two types of blended essays in journalism are conventional technique and the new journalism technique. In this Unit, we shall examine the conventional technique.

**2.0 Objectives**

This Unit is to enable you to:

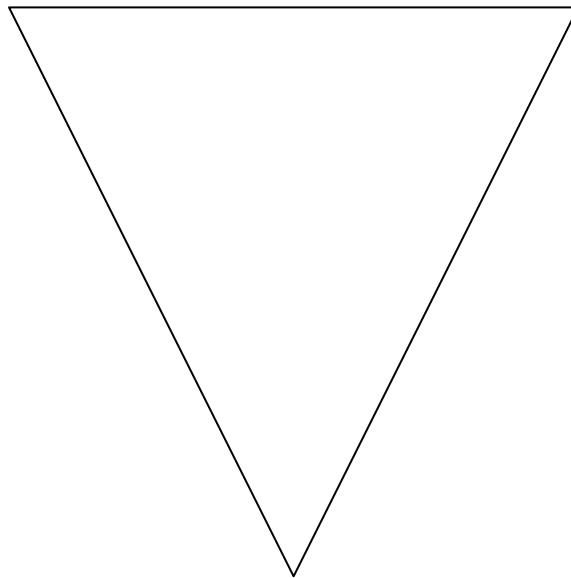
- Readily identify the two broad genres of journalistic writing – the traditional/conventional technique and the new or literary journalism.
- Explain the characteristics and usage of conventional techniques of journalistic writing.

### 3.0 Main Content

#### 3.1 The Conventional/Traditional Technique

Also known as the traditional technique, the conventional genre of feature writing takes the classical organisation pattern. It starts with an *introduction*, moves on to the *body* and rounds up with a *conclusion*.

The traditional feature writing technique took its root from the formal method of writing news – otherwise known as the Inverted Pyramidal structure:



The writer using this technique identifies the Five Ws and H, adopts a sequential rhetoric structure and fleshes up the structure using the answers to the Five Ws and an H progressively. He or she moves from the particular to the broad.

The INTRODUCTION welcomes the reader into the story and gives a direction of what to expect. The BODY (made up of paragraphs) continues the sequential order until the end when a summary is provided to end the story. No matter how the conventional approach writer attempts to blend his or her write up, he or she does not usually deviate from ‘house style’ on how stories should be written. The following article by **Sade Oguntola** in the *Nigerian Tribune* is typical of the traditional style of feature writing:

#### **Why tongue cancer is sexually transmittable**

*Many indulge in oral sex because it is taken to be safe. However experts say that the idea that oral sex is risk-free is incorrect. They point out that oral sex has significant risks, and that the possibility of developing cancer is one of them, reports Sade Oguntola.*

Issues relating to sex usually get the attention of many people. The topic becomes considerably more relevant, indications that people that indulge in unsafe sexual practices, like oral sex, may be exposing themselves to some cancers that affect the throat, tonsils and the back of the tongue.

*(Opening statement of fact introduces the topic as in formal essays. It is like someone who begins a speech with 'It affords me a great pleasure to address you this afternoon...')*

Although this may sound fearful, scientists have linked a virus Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), which is contracted through oral sex, to certain forms of cancer. HPV infection was found to be a much stronger reason for these cancers than even tobacco or alcohol use.

Although there is not strong proof yet, based on correlations with sexual behaviour, and an abundance of similar findings around the world over the past few years, scientists said there is alarming medical concern that the infection was being acquired through unprotected oral sex.

*(Passive sentences elaborate the beginning of the body-parts of the essay)*

Oral sex is stimulating the genitals with the mouth, lips and tongue: that is, kissing, sucking, licking and nibbling; many people use oral sex as foreplay or a substitute for intercourse, because it can be just as important and enjoyable as full sex.

However, the idea that oral sex is risk-free is not correct. It comes with significant risks, such as contracting sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea, Chlamydia, and HPV, HPV is a particularly scurrilous threat, since it incubates silently in the back of the mouth, and is now linked to a dangerous form of through cancer in both men and women, which is similar to the one that arises in the cervix.

*(Familiar narrative sequence continues in the body of the feature to highlight further details of the problem being presented. The writer assumes the reader understands all the technical details.)*

In some parts of the world, and with an increase in the number of younger people in their 30s and 40s, developing this cancer was attributed, in part, to a “change in sexual behaviour” over the last decade.

HPV is everywhere, and the virus is just like HIV because it causes multiple type of cancer. Of the 120 strains isolated from humans, about 40 of which are in the mouth and genital tract, there is a vaccine for protecting against only four. These include those species that cause warts and cervical cancer.

*(Exemplifications still in the narrative sequence)*

HPV infection is the cause of the majority of cervical cancers, and 80 per cent of sexually active women can expect to have an HIV infection at some point in their lives. Most HPV infections clear with little or no symptoms but experts says, a small percentage of people who acquired high-risk strains may develop a cancer.

*(Analyses still in the narrative sequence)*

The study, which appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)*, showed that men and women who reported having six or more oral sex partners during their lifetime, had a nearly nine-fold increased risk of developing cancer of the tonsils or at the base of the tongue. Of the 300 study participants, those infected with HPV were also 32 times more likely to develop throat cancer than those who did not have the virus.

Dr. Bukola Adeyemi, a consultant oral pathologist at the University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan, Oyo State, explained that for oral cancers, HPV could be it cause. She stated that HPV could be introduced into the mouth through several ways, and that because the virus could live within saliva, it could easily be transmitted through saliva and oral sex.

*(Description in the narrative sequence)*

According to the expert, “having oral cancer is more dependent on having HPV than gum diseases, a term that covers a lot of things like having sores in the mouth. Some people might say having any disease on the gum may make you prone to having cancer. There are some studies that suggest that disease in the mouth exposes an individual to cancer, but the case is not the same with oral cancer”

*(Interviews in the narrative format)*

“With cancer, the case is different. Cancer is based on immunity or how competent your immunity is, and it is believed that the more the exposure to some chronic infections, the higher the chances of coming down with cancer in some individuals. For instance, malaria has been implicated in most common cancers of the white blood cell (lymphoma), in children.

Much as the way cancers occur is not exactly known, she said, some factors had been implicated in its cause and HPV, an infection, is one of such factors.

She explained that some factors control how genes proliferate, and that whenever there is a problem with the cell that suppresses the growth of abnormal cells, they continue to grow. “When cells are abnormal, the body recognizes this, and takes steps to destroy those abnormal cells, so that they do not proliferate or continue to grow. But since the suppressor gene is faulty, even though it is seeing the bad cells, there is no power to suppress it, so it would continue to proliferate. HPV has a power to affect some of these suppressor genes.”

Meanwhile, she pointed out that such things as smoking of tobacco and alcohol consumption are general predisposing factors that may accentuate the virus making an individual more susceptible to oral cancer. “All these are predisposing factors for cancer generally, and all are still based on genetic composition of the individual. Genetics is very important in anything that we do. It tells us how our body breaks down whatever we put into it. It has been proved that people that drink and or smoke are exposes to cancer, just as HPV infection makes an individual prone to having oral cancer.”

*(Human angle introduced but still in the straight-jacket narrative format.)*

Dr. Adeyemi explained that cases of cancer affecting the tongue, tonsil and other are seen often in Nigeria. “We cannot say it is common. It depends on what you mean by common, but it is not like malaria, and we see them often.”

Dr. Diran Olabisi, an ear, nose and throat expert at Highland Specialist Hospital, Yemetu, Ibadan, Oyo State, confirmed there was the possibility of cancers of the mouth region arising from oral sex. “This is possible because several viruses can be contracted through sexual contact. Such viruses can misbehave at any time. Once the virus enters into your cell, it can take over the activity of that cell and transform it. The virus is

initially benign, but over the years, these cells can transform to cancerous ones”.

The Johns Hopkins study took blood and saliva from 100 men and women newly diagnosed with oropharyngeal cancer which affects the throat, tonsils and back of the tongue. They also asked questions about sex practices and other risk factors for the disease, such as family history. They found that disease of the virus – was present in the tumors of 72 per cent of cancer patients in the study.

(Exemplification)

A Swedish study that appeared in the *International Journal of Cancer* also linked oral sex to tonsil cancer. Researchers at Sweden’s Karolinska Institute analyzed cells taken from 98 patients with tonsil cancer between 2003 and 2007, and found 83 of them were positive for a strain of the HPV that caused this cancer. Tonsil cancer develops in a part of the throat known as the *oropharynx*. Symptoms include difficulty swallowing, sore throat, blood in the saliva, and weight loss.

(Exemplification)

Similarly, a report in the May 2007 *New England Journal of Medicine* indicated that people who had oral sex with at least six partners were three times more likely to get throat cancer as those who were less sexually active.

Some experts said the introduction of the cervical cancer vaccine for girls and women, which covers the common strains of HPV, may also help reduce the incidence of some head and neck cancers.

(Conclusion with a summary sentence)

The structure of a conventional feature form is usually as follows:

1. The Introduction (usually the first or the first and second paragraphs). This could take any of the kinds of features leads: news peg lead, question lead, quotation lead, literary allusion lead, contrast lead, descriptive lead, direct address lead, etc.
2. Body begins with a thesis statement. This is a sentence that sets the tone and theme of what the entire piece is all about.
3. Bridges (paragraphs of quotations, cut-backs, exemplifications, analysis, as the case may be, are built to continue telling the in a narrative style.)
4. Summary sentence to conclude the feature.



In terms of style:

1. Much like the news story, the conventional feature format does not allow the writer's personality to be heavily involved in the article. The writer has a framework to follow and hardly ever moves away from this framework.
2. The writer is confined more or less to simple sentences and occasionally compound sentences. Very rarely can one find complex sentences, exclamatory sentences and interrogative sentences in the conventional style of features.
3. The writer uses simple concrete words, and limited variety of expression even when writing non-news features such as expose, travelogue, narratives and descriptive features.
4. Of the five senses of the reader, the ones most by the traditional-styled feature writer are the eyes and ears.
5. The straight or conventional feature is essentially built on facts. The most important thing it offers is presentation of information.
6. In short, the conventional format of a feature article is more or less a long news report. That is why some scholars (like Delu Ogunade) and skilled writers (like Mike Awoyinfa) believe a feature story has nothing to do with the 'pyramid' (standing or inverted). According to Ogunade, journalists who want to write a feature story must first unlearn the hard news writing format (5Ws and H) because this format limits the ability to express, the hallmark of feature writing.

### **3.2 Self-Assessment Questions**

1. Conventional feature writing format is outmoded; it makes feature articles colourless and should not be found on the pages of modern newspapers and magazines. Discuss.
2. List the characteristics of traditional conventional feature writing technique.
3. Why would a business editor insist on the conventional style of features?

### **4.0 Conclusion**

Conventional feature writing format (an extended version of the news format) still has its place in feature writing. Its purpose is to allow a little room for the writer to elaborate the news without deviating from news writing formats. No matter how hard 'new journalism' exponents try to write off the traditional feature format, they

would not be able to obliterate it. Truthfully, if all journalism is made to look like prose or literature, the elegance of straight news writing, especially the virtue of telling it as it is, will be lost. News features, travelogues, exposés, investigative reports, cover stories do not always have to carry so too many details, some of which sometimes are unnecessary. Many organisations do not have the space to lavish so much text matter and some news media (for instance, the evening paper) will always be more at home with straight or conventional feature styles.

Again, much depends on the house style of the media organization. Broad sheet journals and business magazines prefer the conventional style while tabloids, sports and human interest publications prefer the new journalism style. The problem with most conventional-styled articles is not that the style is ineffective but that the writer is not skillful.

## 5.0 Summary

The traditional feature style is like a very long news report and therefore assumes the characteristics of straight news writing. It has the following features:

- The Introduction tells the most important aspect of the feature but could take any of the kinds of features leads: news peg lead, question lead, quotation lead, literary allusion lead, contrast lead, descriptive lead, direct address lead, etc.
- Body provides a neck for the intro with a thesis statement - a sentence that sets the tone and theme of what the entire piece is all about.
- The main body of the story is made up of bridges - paragraphs of quotations, cut-backs, exemplifications and analysis, depending on the subject matter.
- The sequence of the traditional feature is narrative essentially
- The concluding part of the feature is summary sentence that encapsulate the entire piece.
- Much like the news story, the conventional feature format does not allow the writer's personality to be heavily involved in the article.
- The writer is confined more or less to simple sentences and occasionally compound sentences.

- The writer uses simple concrete words, and limited variety of expression even when writing non-news features such as expose, travelogue, narratives and descriptive features.
- Of the five senses of the reader, the ones most needed by the traditional-styled feature writer are the eyes and ears.

## 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment

1. Re-write the following feature (an abridged version) - written in the ‘new journalism style’ - in the traditional feature style:
2. Cut out five features written in the traditional or conventional format from a national newspaper of your choice.

### *Behold, the new Bob Marley*

*By Mike Awoyinfa (National Concord)*

*He is a phoenix, a songbird born out of the ashes of Bob Marley’s death. He takes Bob Marley’s song, Redemption Song, and soars with it into the azure sky, then comes down with it, down to the disco floor, turning a spiritual song into foot-stomping dance music.*

*Some even say his own version of Redemption Song has more appeal than that of Bob Marley. Just as you are thinking there can never be anyone like Bob Marley in the reggae music world then comes Majek Fashek (Majekodunmi Fasheke), a supernova sent from heaven right to Nigeria to step into Bob Marley’s shoes.*

*He comes on stage, light-complexioned like Marley, a cap crowning his deadlocks, a bell in hand and chiming the bell like the New Testament prophet, John the Baptist, and asking his listeners to “Repent, for the Kingdom of Jah is at hand.”*

*Fashek is no precursor. He is no forerunner foretelling the advent of a greater prophet. He is the prophet himself, the long-awaited messiah who would take Nigerian pop music out to conquer the outside world.*

*Not since the time wonder-boy Kris Okotie - now turned a reverend – has a musical genius emerged out of Nigeria. Fashek is talented. He is a joy to listen to. He restores into pop a sense of joie de vivre.*

*“There is no difference between his voice and that of Bob Marley,” says Tera Kota, himself a reggae star. “He is infusing a lot of disco flavour into reggae. I particularly appreciate his own version of Redemption Song. I will go for his.”*

*“He would rise to superstar status,” says disc jockey Stagger Lee. “You think it’s Bob Marley born again. Nobody can do Redemption Song the way he did. I think it’s as good as Bob Marley’s. I played it on BBC London last October and I got three calls asking for details. The melody of his songs are (sic) so beautiful, so palpable that you can physically hold and romance the songs.”*

*“The guy just sounds like Bob Marley,” remarks ace producer Teles Nkono. “A lot of Bob Marley’s fans should embrace this new album.”*

*The album being referred to is “Prisoner of Conscience” which is Fashek’s debut album. It was produced by Lemmy Jackson, with Teles Nkono and Fashek himself as co-producers.*

*Fashek used to be the lead singer of the reggae group Ja’s tix, but due to contractual problems the group had with Japex Records, he had to go out and sign a solo album contract with Tabansi Records.*

*The result is the superlative album which has instantly catapulted Fashek to the reggae music throne of Africa.*

**7.0 References/Further Reading**

Awoyinfa M., and Igwe, D., (2003). The Art of Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines. Lagos: McDee Communications.

Okoye, I., (1998). Feature Writing: Theory and Practice. Lagos: Mic Pac Ventures Ltd.

**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATIONS****MODULE 2 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATION GENRES****UNIT 2 - *THE NEW JOURNALISM OR LITERARY JOURNALISM TECHNIQUE*****1.0 Introduction**

Remember we stated in Unit 1 of this Module that “skillful journalistic writing comes in form of blended essays: You have to skillfully combine the features of narration, with exemplification, human angle, classification, analysis, argumentation and description in a single piece sometimes (as the need arises)”. The second type or genre of blended essays in journalism is known as the new journalism. Because it borrows so much from the literary world, it is sometimes known as literary journalism. This should not be confused with literary writing (review of arts, drama and literature).

**2.0 Objectives**

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Readily identify the second broad genre of journalistic writing – known as the new journalism or sometimes ‘literary journalism’.
- Explain the characteristics and usage of the new journalism technique and when it is most suitable to use the approach.

**3.0 Main Content****3.1 Characteristics of New Journalism**

Credit for the new journalism genre is usually given to the likes Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, Michael Herr, Richard Goldstein, Terry Southern, Nicholas Tomalin, Garry Wills and Jimmy Breslin – journalists who took the journalism world by storm in the 60s and 70s, breaking the rules and norms of journalistic writing. They simply wrote features ‘their own ways’ – like a poem, the way they talked, like a novel, with scenes plotted out and dialogues extended, etc. These writers adopted

traditional characteristics of fiction writing to non-fiction and for the first time artistry entered journalism.

Note Awoyinfa and Igwe (2002):

“Unlike an ordinary feature (which takes the form of standard news writing) New Journalism was more taxing, painstaking and required a lot of research. It called for a journalist having to stay with the person being interviewed for a longer period, for days and weeks or even months, so as to be able to capture all the relevant scenes he would need to describe in his feature. And in the course of staying with the subject, the reporter has to be on the alert. You have to be alert for chance remarks, odd details, quirks, curios, anything that may serve to bring a scene alive when you are writing – as well as long stretches of dialogue.”

“The idea,” says Tom Wolfe “was to give the full objective description, plus something that readers had always had to go to novels and short stories for: namely, the subjective or emotional life of the characters. Only through the most searching forms of reporting was it possible, in non-fiction, to use whole scenes, extended dialogue, point-of-view and interior monologue.”

At first, the style was scorned. It was snubbed on account of being subjective form of writing (whereas journalism should be objective writing). Later, its descriptive attribute was termed ‘impressionistic writing’: rather than report as a witness, the writer is accused of trying to impress and perhaps exaggerate. Those who use the style were dubbed ‘para-journalists’. Perhaps what made new journalism to be quickly accepted soon after was the fact that even literary writers (novelists, poets) embraced the style. For instance, Truman Capote’s novel, *In Cold Blood*, the true story of two ex-convicts who slaughtered four members of a Kansas farm family became a bestseller. Another American novelist, Norman Mailer, wrote his *Armies of the Night* based on the new journalism technique. Today, novelists write true-life stories in form of fictions, a variant of the new journalism genre called *faction*.

Despite its popularity, opinions are still divided on the use of new journalism. Note Awoyinfa and Igwe (2002):

“There have been moments of scandal and disgrace when some journalists carried New Journalism to a dishonest extreme, where they resorted to fictionalizing their features. The classic case was in April 1981 when Janet Cooke, an American journalist, had to forfeit a Pulitzer Prize she had won for the *Washington Post* because she had fabricated the story of a child drug addict named “Jimmy” whom she wrote about. It was later discovered there was nobody like that.”

In other words, in an attempt to ‘write like a novelist’ many journalists ‘Cooke up the details’. In an effort to be impressionistic, a writer adds ‘salt, pepper and other ingredients’ to sweeten the feature, thereby perpetrating the spread of falsehood. Like conventional feature writing style, the new journalism style is not the problem. All good writing takes great effort to produce.

### 3.2 Characteristics of New Journalism

- a. The feature using the new journalism format must have a plot. Like a playwright, the writer first determines a theme, a tone and a perspective which will best convey the meaning he or she wants to pass across. For instance, in reporting a memorable football match, the feature writer may decide to involve the reader as if he or she were part of the spectators; as if the feature reporter witnessed the match as a third party; as if the feature writer was a radio commentator, etc. All of these plots would determine the style or styles the writer would eventually adopt.
- b. New journalism style is descriptive, whatever the subject-matter. As Tom Wolfe, one of the pioneers of the journalism genre, put it, “it is like a novel.” The writer pays attention to details in researching and writing the script.
- c. The story is usually humanized. Novelists made great impact on readers because they are able to touch the inner chords of readers’ emotions. Writers who use the new journalism approach adopt the same approach. If you want to arrest the interest of mothers, talk about babies. If you want to readers to read all-through, involve all of the human senses. Evoke sympathy, empathy and sense of judgment. Whip up sentiments and ethical considerations even when writing about the most serious subject and your article will be read.



d. Humour and anecdotes. Although not all features in the new journalism genre have it, humour is a common element in most features written in the format. This is principally because, often, the major goal of the writer is to entertain and humour is very handy in making people relax their nerves.

e. There is liberty of grammatical form and style. Short sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, clauses, adjectives and conjunctions are used to create necessary impact and flow. Dan Agbese used this ‘staccato effect’ (short, abrupt words and sentences) in introducing *Little Hands of Death* (*Newswatch*, November 17, 1986) on the murder of his friend and colleague, Dele Giwa:

The postman arrives. The heartbeat quickens. The spine tingles. Anticipation pulls warm sweat along the brows. Good news? Bad news? The post man is a harbinger of both. Reason his sight excites.

The object of anxiety is an envelope. In its flat belly lies the message, presently a cause for joy or sadness. Fingers lift up the gummed flap. Its content, a neatly folded paper, is coaxed out. The drums of the heart-beat rise to a crescendo. The heart-beats a tattoo. And out of the squiggles, a voice leaps out in total silence, yet fills the body with a familiar sound – the unmistakable voice of a loved one, a brother, a sister or parents or business associate. Words talk. In any case, letters do.

f. Simple language. The new journalism style is written in plain language, often in conversational language but sometimes very technical language but always simply written.

g. May not contain facts. The University of Southern Queensland (Australia) manual on Journalism Publication says the following about the new journalism technique: “...when it comes to this kind of features, especially those written for the more popular magazines, the material most valued by the reader may contain hardly any facts at all. What such readers want (or, at any rate, what the editors assume they want) are opinions, views and polemical discussion.”

h. The writer is ‘involved’ in the article. The personality of the feature writer reflects through a feature written in the new journalism style. You can tell the kind of person this kind of writer is sometimes, unlike one who writes in the conventional style form where the writer is completely a witness or third person.

- i. There is no regular structure. Within a single article written in the new journalism genre, one could find narrative passages, exemplifications, quotations and descriptions all juxtaposed (it depends on how skillful the writer is). Says Tom Wolfe (1980):

I never felt the slightest hesitation about trying any device that might conceivably grab the reader a few seconds longer. I tried to yell right in his ear: *Stick around!*...Sunday supplements were no place for diffident souls. That was I how I started playing around with the device of point-of-view.

‘Anything can happen’ is perhaps the best way to describe the style of a new journalism exponent. In ending *A Gift of Garlands*, (*Newswatch* July 21, 1986), Ray Ekpu ended the piece with a one-paragraph word: Baffling. The writer may choose not to have an intro distinct from the body and sometimes the body is part of the conclusion – that is when there is a conclusion. For instance, in writing an interview story, a writer can completely remove all narratives and descriptions, allowing himself and the subject to just talk to the reader. Reuben Abati frequently uses this style in opinion writing. Check out the Majek Fashek story by Mike Awoyinfa, written in the new journalism style (in the Tutor-Marked Assignment in Module 2, Unit 1) in a conversational format of new journalism:

***30 minutes with the Rainmaker, Majek Fashek***

*By Bolu John Folayan*

“People refer to you as the new Bob Marley. Do you like such compliment?”

“I and I is Majek Fashek. I-man is the son of the living Jah. Bob Marley was the son of the living Jah. He is my brother, but I am Majek-Fashek and not Bob.”

“From which State in Nigeria do you hail from, Majek?”

“I and I is a living being and the Universe is my roots. Jah is the owner of the Universe. Africa is the original home of Jah. The white man stole the Blackman’s civilization but Jah has restored I and I to redeem the world.”

“So you are not from Osun or Edo State? I read a newspaper report that your mother is from Benin, Edo State, while your father is from Ilesa, in Osun State...”

“I and I is a living man and a creation of Jah. That’s what I can tell you. Jah bless.”

“Where were you before the recording of this monster-hit of an album titled, *Prisoner of Conscience?*”

“We had a group known as Ja’stix. I was the lead singer. We had a contract with Japex Records but somehow it didn’t work out. I and I got an offer from Tabansi Records and recorded the album. All glory to Jah for the acceptance of the album so far. Halle-lu jah, halle-lu jah!”

“Would you describe your music as rock reggae?”

“It’s called *pangolo*. It is roots music. It is music for the soul – to free people from the bondage of emotional and cultural slavery.”

“Pangolo?”

“*Pangolo.*”

“You want to use this *pangolo* to spread the message of salvation to the world...:

“Yeah, mon.”

“I guess that informs the track *Redemption Song*...”

“Yeah, mon! Yeah mon!. Africans must emancipate themselves from mental slavery...”

“...For none but ourselves can free our minds...”

“Yeah, my brother. How long shall they kill our prophets while we stand aside an’ look?”

**Note:** *Although the above is an imaginary conversation with Majek Fashek, Mike Awoyinfa could also have used the same interview transcripts to write a feature like this. Presentation styles in the new journalism style is almost limitless; it is all about how creative and skillful the writer is. In the above example, the writer completely eliminated all forms of descriptions and narratives, leaving only the conversations. Another writer could take note of the environments, including distractions during the interview as the major part of the story.*

The new journalism style can be used for virtually any form of features (it is the dominant news writing style used by tabloids, even for news reports). It is writing craftsmanship – the journalist does more than just report an event. Consider the following opinion-feature by Ray Ekpu:

### **A HOLLOW RITUAL**

*By Ray Ekpu (Newswatch, February 3, 1986)*

THEY all made it look as though there was some serious business going on.

A huge knock on the door, the judge enters, everybody sits down, the judge appears in black suit, the lawyers appear in black suits, and all the ceremonies, protocols and rituals associated with such occasions are observed. But in the end it turned out to be a joke, a huge joke, a hollow ritual of comic tragedy which the trial of a president ought not to be.

It was clear to most people after a few days of the clowning that what was going on in the Justice Samson Uwaifo tribunal that was hearing the case of the former President Shehu Shagari and the ex-Vice President Alex Ekwueme, that the whole thing, was a farce, inelegantly contrived much in the manner of a kangaroo court rendered even more kangarooic, permit the coinage, by the abject naivety of the presiding judge. But everything was dressed up in the robes of a court - prosecution, witnesses, defence et al - and it is all too amazing that any judge worth the chair on which he sits could not see that what was going on in the name of a trial was a non-trial, an insult to his intellect, his integrity and his profession.

From start to finish it was apparent that Baba Mohammed Jamare was a defence counsel masquerading as a prosecution witness. Every inch of the way, the deputy commissioner of police bent over backwards 'to ensure that the case he was supposed to have investigated these past two years would collapse like a house of cards. The case did collapse just as he wished and Kehinde Sofola, the defence counsel, struggled pathetically to play a role that was not available for him to play, since Jamare had stolen the thunder from him. Sofola had no choice but to play the role of a cheer leader.

It was a pathetic scene, one that was capable of inducing nausea. The investigating police officer would step forward and tell the tribunal the mind-boggling story of how Nigeria's money was shared by a few fat cats in the residence of the president. And the president, the innocent "Jesus" of Nigeria, instead of calling the police to arrest the bastards just as the other Jesus did when some crooks invaded the temple, decided to step out at that time for prayers. By the time he said "Amen" the crooks in his house had also said "Amen," drawing the curtain on one of the scenes of one of the acts of one of the plays titled, *The Raping of Nigeria*.

Then Jamare would step out again to tell the tribunal that although many things were going the wrong way the executive president of Nigeria didn't know anything, didn't see anything, didn't hear anything, didn't smell anything, for as soon as he became president he lost his sense of intuition, his sense of sight, his sense of hearing and his sense of smell. After this charade of public deceit, the witnesses would be called and who were the witnesses? The very same people who scrambled for the money. They would tell the tribunal that the president didn't know whether their party, the NPN, had financial problems or not, he didn't know how contracts were awarded, whether kickbacks were given or taken and by whom, although he was always present at the meetings of the party's caucus, the highest policy-

making body of the party and the government. A more sensitive judge, a judge determined to get to the bottom of the matter, a Judge John Sirica of the Watergate fame, would have ordered the immediate arrest of those crooks, some of whom had appeared in court to give evidence on the matter. But Samson Uwaifo didn't. He patiently listened to all the hogwash and as his judgment indicated, he naively believed it all.

Uwaifo even had the temerity to tell Nigerians who lived in Nigeria in the years of the Holocaust, 1979-1983, the years when the great slaughter of Nigeria took place, that the price of rice was brought down from N100 per bag to N45. It is either that the judge was living on the moon at that time or he has just returned from the Island of Bliss or he had something up his sleeves for no one who lived in this country at the period or lives here now and pays all the taxes and levies and "donations" and tariffs and surcharges will be in so much want of a sense of history or a sense of reality.

The judge may argue that he decided the case based on the facts placed before him. But even a pupil lawyer doing his apprenticeship in the dingy chambers of a charge-and-bail lawyer in a one-room office in Isale-Eko, knows that a judge has the latitude, particularly in a landmark case such as this, to call for more facts that would enable him to arrive at a just and believable decision. No case is decided in the abstract. Every judgment finds its meaning only in time and space; no judgment can ignore the prevailing circumstances of a given society at a given time. To listen to this story of the sack-of-naira administration that distinguished itself for its unconscionableness and not be shocked by it is to display a wanton disregard for the moral sensitivity of the long-suffering people of Nigeria.

What the Uwaifo tribunal was saying in effect is that Shagari and his gang did no wrong, that the country should call them back, apologise to them, give them a bouquet of flowers, kiss them on both cheeks and hand over the government to them, and then it will be business as usual. And what are Nigerians expected to say to all these? To simply sigh and say that it is one of those things, a typical Nigerian expression for nonchalance, and then take their Bibles and Korans and go to the churches and mosques and pray to God and Allah to bless the some of all those who turned the country into Dante's Inferno, 1979-83?

But unlike the Uwaifo panel the Babangida government has displayed a deep sense of sensitivity to the public mood, giving itself the image of a government that is politically sagacious. It has ignored for now the ridiculous "order" for the freeing of Shagari and his deputy, Alex Ekwueme. The so-called judgment should be dumped in the refuse bin where it belongs for it is not worth the piece of paper on which it is written.

The loser in this case is, of course, Justice Uwaifo, who will be recorded on the wrong side of history as one Nigerian who was given a national assignment but who discharged it with unparalleled perfunctoriness.

*COMMENTS: Did you notice the 'plot' of the entire script? Did you notice the blend of techniques – from direct address, to description to narration to expose back to direct address? How about the writer's sense of humour and poignancy of expressions? Did you see the hooks with which he hooked you to read the entire script. How did he link his paragraphs...?*

“... as though there was some serious business going on” makes the reader want to read the next paragraph.

“But in the end it turned out to be a joke, a huge joke, a hollow ritual of comic tragedy which the trial of a president ought not to be,” in the second paragraph keeps us in check to see how the trial really went....

The next three or four paragraphs dramatize the court trial as a tragicomedy, holding the reader firmly on.

The summary sentence in the last paragraph encapsulates the essence of the entire piece.

As usual, in this article Ray Ekpu plays up his greatest skill as a writer, the ability to express his thoughts. New journalism, much more than conventional feature style, allows the writer to let his or her being flow through his or her piece without making the article subjective or biased as it is in *A hollow ritual*. Did you count how many words the writer coined or invented: “unconsciousableness”, “charge-and-bail lawyer”, “perfunctoriness”, “kangarooic” and “donations” are some of them.

### **3.3 Self-Assessment Questions**

1. Write a plot for a story of how a child trafficker was nabbed by mobs and handed over to the police. What kind of feature (by form and style) best fits this kind of feature?
2. To what extent is a writer who uses the new journalism style objective?

#### 4.0 Conclusion

The new journalism style originated from American journalists in the 60s and has come to stay as a genre of journalistic writing. It entails a journalist writing in his or her own way – like a poem, the way he or she talks, like a novel, with scenes plotted out and dialogues extended, etc. The writer adopts traditional characteristics of fiction writing to non-fiction and for the first time artistry entered journalism. However, the new journalism style is not suitable in all situations and for all house styles. Sometimes, too, the journalist is tempted to make up facts in order to make his or her stories ‘impressive’ or ‘impressionistic,’ but this is inherent in the writer, not in the style.

#### 5.0 Summary

The new journalism technique has the following characteristics:

- The feature using the new journalism format must have a plot. Like a playwright, the writer first determines a theme, a tone and a perspective which will best convey the meaning he or she wants to pass across.
- New journalism style is descriptive, whatever the subject-matter. The writer pays attention to details in researching and writing the script.
- The story is usually humanized. Writers who use the new journalism approach adopt the approach of novelists: involve all of the human senses. Evoke sympathy, empathy and sense of judgment.
- Humour Although not all features in the new journalism genre have it, humour is a common element in most features written in the format.
- There is liberty of grammatical form and style. Short sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, clauses, adjectives and conjunctions are used to create necessary impact and flow.
- Conversational language. The new journalism style is written in plain language, often in conversational language.
- It does not have to be loaded with facts, like straight features.
- There is no regular structure. Almost anything goes depending on the creativity and skill of the writer. The article may have an intro and no conclusion; a conclusion with no special intro.



**6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment.**

1. Explain the origin and features of the new journalism genre. What are the disadvantages of the genre?
2. Cut five features written in the new journalism style from a national newspaper of your choice.

**7.0 References/Further Reading**

Awoyinfa M., and Igwe, D., (2003). *The Art of Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines*. Lagos: McDee Communications.

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**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATIONS****MODULE 3 - WRITING THE CONVENTIONAL FEATURE STORY****UNIT 1 - NEWS FEATURES AND PROFILES****1.0 Introduction**

One basic fact you have to keep in mind about the ‘conventional or traditional feature story style’ is that this genre of writing is based on traditional news writing techniques. But the writer adds little variations depending on the subject of the story or report. We shall examine these variations regarding News Features, Profiles and Exposés, in this Unit. We shall examine Travelogue and Do-it-yourself Features in Unit 2 of this Module.

**2.0 Objectives**

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the structure and style of writing News Features and Profiles.
- Write conventional feature stories in news feature, profile and investigative formats.

**3.0 Main Content****3.1 Writing Features and Profiles****NEWS FEATURES**

The news feature is an extended news report, essentially. It has all the attributes of news – informative, timely, prominent, unusual, odd, interesting, and consequential – except that, unlike a news report, it is not usually as brief as straight news. Even then, the divide is not water-tight – there are news features well-written in just five paragraphs!

News features used to be a little delayed – they used to come a few days, sometimes weeks, after the news had broken. Today, news features compete in term of timeliness with straight news. It is not about time, but the best approach to

report the event. Some events are better reported in news feature format. People want to know the implications of breaking news immediately, not sometimes later.

The tone of a news feature is more relaxed. Thus, while we talk of ‘hard news’ (reports of serious issues/events e.g. bank failure, bombing) and ‘soft news’ (report of less serious issues/events e.g. a man naming 20 children from different wives same day), in journalism, there is nothing like ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ features. Features are naturally more relaxed in tone, even when the feature is about very serious issues.

Awoyinfu and Igwe (2002) describe a news feature as “a news item reported in a relaxed, informal style which is the mark of features; some stories are more effective when you take a softer approach rather than a hard news style of reporting. A feature story inspired by an event or personality in the news can fit into the category of a news feature.”

Most of the reports you read in weekly news magazines are news features. Weekend newspapers also use the technique frequently, although they also write other forms of features.

### ***Ingredients of a News Feature***

- i. There must be a “News Peg”.* A news feature must convey some news. It is only different from straight news in terms of its presentation. This is usually embedded in the intro or lead of the story.
- ii. It must contain facts.* Not all news reports contain facts. A fact is something that actually exists or proof of something’s existence. Some features do not have facts and they still remain beautiful features. Femi Adesina (of the *Sun*) once wrote a beautiful feature story titled ‘Conversation with Ibrahim Badamasi Banbangida’. He told his readers in detail how he was invited to Minna by the retired general and his encounters with him. At the end of the feature, Adesina only implied that he had been dreaming. There was absolutely no fact in the report but it was an excellent feature story. But a news feature must be factual.
- iii. There must be quotes.* In straight news, there may not be enough space for quotes hence the reporter ‘para-phrases’ the events and comments of eye-witnesses. News features should have quotes to liven up the report and serve as additional ‘facts’. A quote is a repeat of the exact words that someone has said.
- iv. Laces of anecdotes.* An anecdote is an amusing sentence or phrase. It may be based or not based on facts of the event. For example, anecdotal evidence is information that is not based on facts or proper studies.

- v. *Interpretation.* Most news features explain the ‘news behind’ the news and ‘news after the news’. Such news is often unveiled through interpretative writing – not just ‘what’ but ‘what does it mean and what does it lead to’, etc. The news just broke out that pop star Michael Jackson is dead. How he died and what his death will result in is usually best handled as news features.

### ***Structure/Style of the News Feature***

Don’t forget that we said what stand out features from other editorial matter are the structure and style of presentation, not really the subject matter. The structure of a News Feature modeled after the Straight News Format. It has two components: Intro and Body.

The *Intro* or *Lead* is the opening paragraphs (sometimes the first two or three paragraphs). The writer can use any of the seven major leads in journalistic writing:

#### *News peg lead:*

The introductory paragraph states the most informative item in the report in an interesting fashion. E.g.:

*Michael Jackson’s youngest child Prince Michael II has not come to terms with what happened to his father.*

*The seven-year-old reportedly asked whether his late superstar dad had simply gone on holiday.*

#### *Literary allusion lead:*

In this kind of lead, the writer uses his or her knowledge of literature and other forms of writings – poems, proverbs, witty comments - to introduce the report. A variant of this is known as ‘*parody lead*’ in which the writer imitates or adapts certain popular quotes. The following intro was adapted from the common saying: “all is well that ends well.”

*For the Super Eagles, all is well when it does not end well.*

*The national team lost their last qualifying match to the World Cup but still got a ticket to the competition, courtesy of a new rule by FIFA known as head-to-head.*

#### *Question lead:*

This kind of lead is in form of an interrogative sentence. It can take any of the 5 Ws and H of news – what, who, where, why, when and how. For a Question Lead to be

a good news feature intro, it must be witty, short and loaded (pregnant with meanings). If the reader is able to answer the question, he or she will not bother to read further: E.g.:

**Bad:**

*Will the police ever find the killers of one of Nigeria's most brilliant journalists, Dele Giwa?*

**Better:**

*Who killed Dele Giwa?*

*Yesterday marked the 20 anniversary of that simple question which six Inspectors-General of Police so far have failed to answer.*

**Not good enough:**

*What can make some parents unwilling to accept their errant children back home after being rehabilitated by a juvenile centre in Lagos State?*

*(The Punch, Monday July 27, 2009).*

**Better:**

*Would you reject your own formerly wayward biological children after their lives have been turned around for the better? That's exactly what 34 parents did in Lagos last week.*

Contrast lead:

The contrast lead is the opening sentence of a feature which contains two or more opposites of people, events, places or issues. Examples:

*The world's most successful singer, Michael Jackson, died yesterday with an indebtedness of N145 billion naira (about 500 million dollars).*

*One of Nigeria's all-time best defenders, Joseph Yobo, scored again yesterday, but this time against his own team.*

Descriptive lead:

This intro describes the major item or an aspect of the news item that forms the basis of the report. The writer starts the feature with a detailed description of the event or scenes from the event. Example:

*Corporal Titus every morning raises his hand to his head in the art of salutation of senior police officers on seeing his “master’s” children peddling their bicycle out of the gate. When it is the “master: or “madam” that is being driven out in the car, he instinctively does the same.*

*Titus, for over 12 years, has been a sentry (called gateman) at the home of the multi-billionaire in Ikoyi, Lagos.*

Direct address lead

The writer addresses the reader in the second person pronoun as if talking to him or her directly. It is rarely used in news features, although it is commonly used in other kinds of features. It can be effectively used in combination with the Question lead as in the following example:

*Who do you think is responsible for last Saturday’s scandalous defeat of the Flying Eagles?*

Interpretative lead

In this kind of lead, the writer brings out the significance of the sentence. Example:

*About nine days into the critical phase of the amnesty – the implementation lap of 60 days that will end in October4 – the main militant group is still assembling a team around its leader for talks with government.*

*(Guardian, August 14, 2009)*

*Local prices of goods and services will continue to rise sharply as the international price of crude oil has dropped to \$40 per barrel, the lowest in the past 20 years.*

If you remove ‘local prices of goods and services will continue to rise sharply’ and ‘the lowest in the past 20 years; the intro has very little meaning, although it can stand as a lead for straight news: “*The international price of crude oil has dropped to \$40 per barrel.*”

Note: We have taken time to look at the various types of leads in this Unit because these leads are also used in writing other types of features besides news features. You will still refer to this Unit in subsequent Units in this course.

### *Structure of the News Feature*

The news feature uses the straight narrative format of the normal news story. No time is available for much details and descriptions. After carefully writing the intro, the writer provides a ‘bridge’ paragraph to serve as the “neck” that links the intro with the body. Usually, this is an elaboration of the intro but it does more than that when properly written: It lures the reader to read the next paragraph.

The remaining body of the story/report is made up of facts, quotes and interpretative sentences arranged in narrative form. A news feature – just like a straight news story – does not have a conclusion. That is why (also like in a straight news report) the sub-editor can cut out several of the last paragraphs of a news feature and nothing substantial would be lost in the story.

### *Illustrative Text of a News Feature Written in the Conventional Style*

Reproduced below is a news feature published in the *Nigerian Tribune* of August 5, 2009, under the headline: ***“Grieving mother fined \$86 by crematorium for taking too long to say good bye to dead baby.”*** My comments are underlined within the feature.

When her son died at the age of only five weeks, Terrie Rouse was naturally heartbroken.

(Short intro with suspended interest; just 16 simple words.)

At his funeral, she could not bear to leave his tiny coffin and spent a few extra precious minutes with it before allowing it to be taken away for cremation.

(The bridge holds on the reader to want to know what happens next)

Her grief turned to shock, however, when officials told her she had taken too long to say goodbye – and fined her \$86 (about N22,790).

The 32-year-old said: “The vicar had asked if I would like to spend a bit more time saying goodbye.

“I sat by the coffin for ten minutes, telling my son how much we loved him and begging him not to be scared.”

(Quotes and anecdotes)

But officials at the crematorium, which is run by Milton Keynes Borough Council, routinely impose an extra charge if any funeral runs over its 30-minute slot.

And so on top of the standard baby cremation fee of \$32 (about N8,480), Miss Rouse found herself facing the \$86 fine for her tearful farewell.

That was despite the couple's funeral directors saying there was still plenty of time for the next funeral which was not due to take place in another 50 minutes.

*(Backgrounding with use of adjectives and adverbs to play up the human interest angle)*

On Monday night, Miss Rouse's partner, Lee Smythe, called the imposition of the charges "sick and disgusting."

*(Half-quote that breaks the monotony of normal quotes introduces spouse)*

"Terrie was weeping hysterically," he said. "She just wanted a few extra minutes to say goodbye to our much-loved little boy.

*(Another form of quote... a break between quotes creates structural variety)*

"How could anyone be cruel enough to charge for this?"

The couple's son, Zane, had died in their arms at their home in Great Linford, Milton Keynes, from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome on April 9.

The family had to wait for three months before they could have a funeral to allow for tests to be carried on his little body.

Mr. Smythe said: "It was distressing enough having to wait for the funeral because we were left in limbo, but this has just made it all worse."

*(Cut-back to background. This tells us the death of the baby is stale news but the material is still good for a news feature. Note the variation in use of quote... "Mr. Smythe said: "It was..." which is different from previous quotes that have the person speaking at the end of the quote.*

He added: "If we had over-run by 30 minutes and had held up proceedings for other people I would understand but this was ten minutes. I really feel like the bosses are taking liberties. All we were doing was saying goodbye to our son."

*(The informative aspects of the report have been reported up to this point and if the remaining paragraphs are left out, nothing substantial would be lost.)*

He described how close family and friends went to the crematorium following a service at St. Andrew's Church.



“When the service ended I was finding it very difficult so went outside,” he said. “My friends came out to comfort me and I knew Terrie was still outside and distraught. She just wanted to say goodbye to Zane and tell him how much we loved him.

“Nobody told us to speed up or said that we had to leave because we were taking up too much time.

“I think it was about ten minutes before I went back inside to get Terrie and still nobody said anything about paying extra.

“I was completely baffled when I heard that would be the case.

“My understanding was there was at least 45 minutes after we left before the next service so we did not hold anybody up.

“The crematorium is not like a cinema, the aisle doesn’t need cleaning. I don’t understand it.”

*(Quotes and anecdotes)*

A council spokesman said the authority was “sorry” for making the extra charge.

“We understand that sometimes more time may be preferred and so families are offered the chance to book extra time if they need it,” he said.

“This means when funerals that have not taken up this option over-run, a fee is automatically charged.

“However, when we learned that there were extenuating circumstances we, of course, refunded the extra charge.”

*(The information that the Council eventually refunded the money was placed at the end of the story because placing it earlier would have weakened the news value.)*

## **PROFILES**

Journalism is people-, places- and date- centred. People, places and dates make news on their own individual merits. When features are focused primarily on a person (also known as *personality feature*), on a place or on a date/event in history, they are known as Profiles. What qualify a person for such attention are usually proximity, news value, uniqueness, age and feats. A Profile is not just a merely biographical report. It is skillful writing that

engages the reader to see, hear and feel through a theme for the purpose of elucidating the personality's involvement in that theme. A Profile can be written on an ancient town, a monument, a festival, a king, a poor hard-working beggar, an outstanding athlete, an athlete who competes for decades without winning any medal, super stars and celebrities, company CEOs etc.

### ***Ingredients of a Profile Feature***

- i. The story angle.* One of the attributes that distinguish other types of features from news features is the 'story angle'. Unlike the straight feature, other types of features, including profiles, must have a story angle – the perspective from which the writer wants to anchor the story. In doing a personality feature about a professor of journalism, for example, there are many angles from which the writer can anchor the feature (most of the angles will be revealed during preliminary research and during the interview for the feature). What is the professor's area of specialization? Perhaps development communication? What studies has he done in the area of development communication? Many feature writers would want to look at the professor's achievements. A creative feature writer may decide to look at the areas in which the professor failed in life. Is he the first professor to have come from his ethnic group? All these are leads that the writer can explore further. That is why it is better to pick an angle while during the pre-interview research or latest during the interview. The writer would then be able to ask more questions from that angle he or she has chosen.
- ii. Sequence.* The profile feature follows a sequence, although this is not necessarily chronological. You can start from where the personality is now and wind his life backwards. You can start from the middle of his life and from the beginning. You can start from a particular edition of a festival and widen the story to other editions of the festival. You can start from a street to profile an entire city. But all of these must follow a sequence so that the reader can follow through without being confused.
- iii. Quotes.* As in other features, quotes are very important in profiles. A profile feature without quotes is like someone sleeping. The life in him or her is not apparent.
- iv. Anecdotes.* Look for incidents, storylines and statements that you can use as anecdotes.

- vi Interpretation. Almost all types of features require some elements of interpretation
- vii Action. Profiles are generally accounts of what has happened in the past – festivals, a career, growth of a town, etc. and could be boring. The writer should therefore put actions between his narratives. Instead of reporting stories told you by the personality in the second person, dramatize it:

***Not too good; the action in the story is murdered by the writer:***

*There were some sour moments however in Professor Simpson; 35-year career as a university don. He told a story of how a lazy undergraduate lady harassed him sexually. According to him, she just bumped into his office one sunny afternoon, indecently dressed and told him pointedly that she would want to have an affair with him.*

*The professor wondered if this young lady was in her right senses and she confirmed in the affirmative, stressing that the professor had better forgotten those morals. She called him Old School.*

***Better; action reflected:***

*There were some sour moments however in Professor Simpson's 35-year career as a university don.*

*One sunny afternoon, the professor heard a gentle tap on his door.*

*"Who is that? Come in please?"*

*A young lady, wearing a mini-skirt and a sleeveless topless blouse, walks in majestically.*

*"Prof, why are you not playing ball? Come on, Prof, I will give it you. You deserve the best...." The lady, probably 21, blabbed but the professor cut her short:*

*"Are you in your right senses?"*

*"Yes, Prof. Don't play the Old School, sir. It's nothing new on campus."*

*Professor Simpson explained that incidents such as the 'Booby Lady Episode' are proofs moral decadence in the country's tertiary institutions.*

However, the writer using the conventional feature style is a bit limited in how much dramatization it can put in the story. This is because the traditional style places more emphasis on *what* is said over *how* it is said.

### ***Structure and Forms of Conventional-Styled Profile Features***

- i. *Cut-backs:* A profile could be boring if rendered as a straight narrative. Without breaking your sequence, you can cut back several years, using quotes especially, to keep the reader excited. The second of the following three paragraphs is a cutback:

*“When my father said he would never allow me to study mass communication I felt very bad,” Professor Simpson recalls, smiling broadly. “But he had a big problem in that I was very poor in Mathematics and the Sciences. You do not study medicine, which he wanted, with English Language, Literature and Geography – my best subjects.”*

*Chief Ajakaiye Simpson, the Prof’s grandfather, had taken ill and died a few days to his coronation as king in 1925. Professor Simpson’s father, Deacon Olu Simpson, later found that his father had died of hypertension and that his death was preventable. He vowed to study medicine as a result.*

*“My father went as far as being a dispenser in the local health centre. That got him more fascinated seeing doctors, pharmacists and other paramedics,” Professor Simpson recalled.*

- ii. *The intro must be engaging.* The writer could use any of the feature leads – question lead, interpretative lead, contrast lead, etc. Often, however, many profile writers use the suspended-interest lead or a summary lead that would keep the reader in suspense until he or she goes through the entire piece.
- iii. *The body of the feature is usually ‘classified’.* The writer uses subtitles (phrases, labels, quotes, etc.) to group the profile. This further makes the profile lively and keeps the reader context – profiles are often lengthy pieces and the writer must do all he or she can to keep

the reader. Quotes, anecdotes and interpretations make up the body of a profile. It is best to make only minimal narratives – unless they are dramatized, which is seldom allowed in conventional features - because they tend to reduce the action in the story.

- iv. Conclusion. Unlike the news feature, the Profile Feature usually has a conclusion. It could be a summary sentence that captures the essence of the entire feature or a snapper that sends the reader reflecting. The poser conclusion ends in form of a rhetorical question.

### **Illustrative Text of Profile Feature Written in the Conventional Style**

The following profile feature appeared in *The Guardian* of August 14, 2009.

#### **Endee Nwachukwu Carving a niche in the Automobile Industry**

Endee Nwachukwu is the Chief Executive Officer of Endee Motors Limited a one-stop automobile supermarket that is involved in the sales of different brands of vehicles and car accessories. Endee is a vibrant and an astute business leader whose contribution to the growth and development of the automobile industry is unrivalled. As a visionary with rare qualities for innovativeness and a quest to carve a niche for himself, he set up Lifeberg Power Industries limited that specializes in the sales and servicing of Kipor brand of diesel and gasoline generators. He maintained that it is his own way of contributing to the economy that has been badly affected by epileptic power supplies. In the course of running his business, Endee has touched the lives of so many youths who hitherto couldn't have stood on their own. He has given meaning to the lives of a whole lot of youths in his community and his immediate environment, a motivator that is poised to give voice to the voiceless. In recognition of his contributions, Rotary Club and Ikeja Local Government gave him award for exemplary leadership. In this interview, Ochiriozuo, as he is fondly called, spoke to Nnamdi Nwokolo of Executive Brief on the focus of a CEO.

#### **Background:**

I went to school like an ordinary Nigerian child from an average family. I had my secondary school education in the seminary school. In the senior seminary, I obtained a Diploma certificate in Latin. I couldn't continue the journey to the priesthood due to my passion for business. I've been in love with business since childhood and all my life I've been involved in one form of business or the other. I thank God for where we are today because it is by His Grace, and by strong determination and hard work.

#### **Challenges of the business environment:**

Government policies have always made it impossible and difficult for importers to actually succeed due to the rising import duties. Our business is basically importation and the import duty regime has been a major challenge most importers encounter. The

overall impact is being felt by every Nigerian because of the rising cost of goods. Until the Nigerian government learns how to make things easy for everybody, we may still be groping in the dark. Government should reduce import duty to encourage importers to use our wharf. This trend has made some importers to use alternative routes to bring in their goods into the country. The instability of the Naira against the dollar occasioned by fiscal instability is a major challenge. The only way out of all this is for government to formulate and implement policies that will stabilize the fiscal environment. My strong belief in God has enabled me to surmount a lot of challenges that have come my way.

### **On the critical factors for business success in Nigeria:**

It is not always easy to succeed in business especially in the Nigerian business environment. One needs a lot of determination and to make some sacrifices to actually succeed in business. Before you can make any meaningful success in life and business, you will first of all believe in your ability and have a can-do spirit, with determination, God will have no option than to crown your efforts with success. Being at the right place at the right time is an important factor that is really critical for achieving success. Most people still believe in cutting corners to achieve success, but I tell you that it doesn't always work. There's a level to which a man can plan, strategize, and implement. Those processes are good, but, God crowns everything. Whatever I do, I ask God to take absolute control of every situation. You will agree with me that there is always light at the end of the tunnel.

### **Unique factors that stand your organization out:**

We have extensive range of quality Kipor generators based on demand from customers. All Kipor products have super silent technology, portability and innovative features. We have generators for large industrial use and a small digital campmate for low consumers. Our larger units are fitted with AVR (automatic voltage regulation) supplying 'clean' power to office blocks, mining applications, construction machinery, refrigeration units, welding applications and more. Combining the value we offer with innovative products, after sales service and technical expertise places Kipor-Generators at the leading edge in our field and the number one choice for our customers. In the Motor Business, Endee Motors Limited has demonstrated a great sense of integrity and honesty in our dealings with customers. We are poised to be the leading organization in the automobile sector of the economy by the quality and durability of the products we stock and sell. In Endee motors, we don't sell sub-standard vehicles. Whatever you buy from us is guaranteed. In 2008, we won an award for multiple stocks in this industry. One of the things that attract customers to our business is that we don't just sell cars, we create relationships.

### **The most important leadership lesson you've learnt:**

I have had the opportunity of attending several leadership workshops and I've learnt that leading by example regarding diligence, integrity and loyalty is very critical to being a successful leader. It is also important to know that leadership is all about service. From time immemorial, great leaders have always been great servants. We created a culture of relationship and team work. I encourage my employees to demonstrate leadership in their own little way. I've also come to understand that leadership is about sacrifice.

### **How do you get in touch with people at all levels in your organization?**

It is one of the key attributes of good leadership. This is a major problem Nigerians are having with their leaders; they pursue people out of the road with their sirens. How then can they effectively feel the pulse of the people? I applaud the Lagos State governor, you hardly notice when he is going on the road. Yet he is doing marvellously well in the areas of infrastructural development. I personally get in touch with everybody irrespective of his position, because I believe that when you get close to people, you'll be able to know their strengths and weaknesses which will enable you take strategic decisions for the overall benefit of all of us. In this organization it will be difficult to identify the CEO and the workers, there's no bossy kind of attitude. That is our style and a key attribute of a good leader.

### **On your focus and projections for the organization:**

My focus is to build a world class conglomerate that will outlive my person. In the next couple of years I see this organization diversifying into several sectors of the Nigerian economy despite the global economic crunch. We have carefully strategized to equip everybody in this organization for the global challenge ahead. I encourage my employees to develop their competencies while giving them ample opportunity to express themselves. We will get there because I try to earn their trust and confidence by being friends with them, with that we will be able to flow together.

### **What drives you?**

The desire to achieve success is the driving force. Success to me does not only mean the amount of mount you have but on the number of lives you are able to touch. In all honesty, the kind of people you associate with determines your drive. I love to see people around achieve success. Success drives and gives me strength. When you are working and you don't see the output, it's not the best.

### **How do you maintain work/life balance?**

Definitely it is not easy to manage the home/office, but as a leader, you have to create a balance to avoid a clash between the two. I don't allow the work in the office to affect the home base. As a CEO that knows what he's doing, you should be able to find a balance because if you neglect either side you lose. Apart from the office, I work out in Ivory Health Club. I do gym a lot, though it has not been easy. Sometimes, I find time to relax. Some evenings if my family is around, I relax with them but I don't keep late nights.

*COMMENTS: The writer introduced the profile and allowed the subject to do the talking. This is perhaps the simplest form of conventional-styled profiles. In using this style, the intro must be very powerful and the transcripts of the interview have to be properly edited. In this feature however the intro is not spectacular – especially for someone that is not very well-known. You do not have to publish everything the subject of the interview says or in the order in which he or she has said it. It is your duty to restructure and place the dialogues without altering the meanings of what the interview said. Notice how the writer used 'classification' to keep the reader in the perspective of the interviewer.*



## THE TRAVELOGUE

The Travelogue feature (an account of a trip to a place or places of interest) really falls either into Profile Features or News Features, depending on the writer's angle. A reporter can do a news feature and a travelogue on the Osun Osogbo Festival, for example. Below is a *Travelogue* published in *Nigerian Tribune* of August 5, 2009. My comments are underlined within and after the text.

### **Aloe Vera: Natural cure for Psoriasis** *Stories by Sade Oguntola*

If you have tried many different remedies to treat psoriasis with no luck, maybe Aloe Vera will be the last remedy you will need to try.

(Direct address intro to secure reader-interest)

For years, Aloe Vera has been used topically for minor burns, sunburn and insect bites, but in the last decade, however, there has been strong evidence indicating that Aloe Vera is a proven natural cure for psoriasis.

(Intro neck links the intro with the body)

Originally from Africa, Aloe Vera is a succulent plant that has over 200 species and grows in arid regions all over the world. Able to thrive both indoors and out, this plant is a popular choice for home gardeners as it's easy to maintain and offers medicinal uses. Aloe leaves contain a clear gel that is often used as a topical ointment.

In a clinical study in support of Aloe Vera for the treatment of psoriasis, experts found that Aloe Vera had a cure rate of 83.3 per cent compared to placebo at 6.6 per cent. Overall, there was a significant reduction in all aspects of the psoriasis. Patients' psoriasis plaques reduced in number and there was reduced discolouration.

(Background)

Psoriasis is an auto-immune disease characterised by excessive multiplication of skin cells commonly seen around the elbows and knees and other areas such as the scalp.

The psoriatic skin appears as red patches covered by thick, dry and silvery scales. Psoriasis is an inheritable skin disease and is often accompanied by arthritis. Many psoriasis patients often complain of arthritic pains in the hands and feet.

The study carried out in Belgium in 1995 had 60 psoriasis patients participating in the double blind placebo-controlled study that had them apply 0.5 per cent Aloe Vera extract in a water-based cream. The cream or gel was applied to the affected area three times daily for five consecutive days at a time and for a minimum of four weeks.

The scientists said its protective effect against psoriasis lasted for almost a year after treatment was stopped, while some patients did not see a return of the psoriasis.



(Facts)

In their publication in the journal, *Tropical Medicine International Health*, they wrote, "the findings of this study suggests that topically applied Aloe Vera extract 0.5 per cent in a hydrophilic cream is more effective than placebo, and has not shown toxic or any other objective side-effects. Therefore, the regimen can be considered a safe and an alternative treatment to cure patients suffering from psoriasis."

Also, a recent research presented at the International Congress of Dermatology revealed promising results in the use of Aloe Vera to treat plaque psoriasis. In a study of 80 individuals, Aloe Vera treatment led to a greater reduction in psoriasis severity when compared to a topical steroid.

(Facts)

These are not surprising as Aloe Vera is known for its skin friendly properties from ages. Aloe Vera is used in many skin care products like creams, lotions, lip balm, soap and aloe gel for sunburn because of its beneficial healing and regenerative properties. It has been used topically for minor burns, sunburn, rashes, sores, herpes, athlete's foot and insect bites.

Studies show that consuming aloe in a pill or liquid form can relieve swelling and inflammation in the joints of arthritis sufferers. Also, there's scientific evidence to support the use of Aloe Vera as a laxative and in reducing dandruff when applied to the scalp.

Most people use Aloe Vera without experiencing any kind of adverse reaction. However, there is a word of caution: anyone with a known allergy to garlic, onions and other plants in the same family with Aloe Vera should avoid using it. Also, Aloe Vera shouldn't be used on severe wounds or burns. In addition, women who are pregnant or breast-feeding should avoid drinking Aloe Vera, as it may stimulate womb contractions.

GENERAL COMMENTS: The writer started well with a good lead and neck but lost the tempo in the middle of the feature and finally ended with a drab conclusion, if we can call it a conclusion. When you use a direct-address, you have to keep to the style...continue to address the reader. Your ending must also talk TO the reader the way you started. Too many narratives without concrete exemplifications (no examples of people who have used it talking about its efficacy) marred the otherwise well-researched feature.

### 3.2 Self-Assessment Questions

1. Compare and contrast the requirements for writing a News Feature and an Profile.

2. Write leads in not more than 26 words of each of the following:

- *Question intro*
- *Literary lead*
- *Interpretative lead*
- *Direct address lead.*

#### 4.0 Conclusion

The ‘conventional or traditional feature genre’ is based on traditional news writing techniques. It tells, unveils an information (the ‘what’ and ‘why’) hence, it has little regard for detailed descriptions and heavy grammatical qualifications. It is however more detailed than a straight news report. The writer adds little variations depending on the subject of the story or report.

#### 5.0. Summary

- Characteristics of **News Features** written in the conventional format are: *There must be a “News Peg”; It must contain facts; There must be quotes; Laces of anecdotes; Interpretation; and Sequential narrative format.*
- Characteristics of **Profile Features** written in the conventional format are: *One strong story angle; Anecdotes; Sequence which may not follow a narrative format; action; interpretation; limited backgrounding; classification of the body of story, and has a conclusion.*

#### 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment

1. Explain the steps in doing an exposé feature and a profile feature.
2. Re-write the following intro still using the conventional news feature format:

*Michael Jackson's youngest child Prince Michael II has not come to terms with what happened to his father.*

*The seven-year-old reportedly asked whether his late superstar dad had simply gone on holiday.*

## **7.0 References/Further Reading**

Awoyinfa M., and Igwe, D., (2003). *The Art of Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines*. Lagos: McDee Communications.

Okoye, I., (1998). *Feature Writing: Theory and Practice*. Lagos: Mic Pac Ventures Ltd.

Phar, Donald and Busceni, Santi V., (2005). *Writing Today: Contexts and Options for the Real World – brief edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATIONS****MODULE 3 - WRITING THE CONVENTIONAL FEATURE STORY****UNIT 2- EXPOSE AND DO-IT-YOURSELF FEATURES****1.0 Introduction**

Recall that we said in Unit 1 of this Module that ‘conventional or traditional feature story style’ as a genre of journalism is based on traditional straight news writing format. The writer has only a little room for variations in style and form, depending on the subject of the story or report. You require basically the same ingredients used in writing News Features, Profiles and Exposés, in writing Do-it-yourself and Opinion/Interview Features. However, there are remarkable variations in the latter two. This is what we shall discuss in the Unit.

**2.0 Objectives**

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate the structure and style of writing Do-it-yourself and Opinion/Interview Features.
- Write conventional feature stories in Do-it-yourself and Opinion/Interview formats.

**3.0 Main Content: Writing Exposé and Do-It-Yourself Feature****3.1 EXPOSÉS**

The investigative story is highly-prized in journalism. The best awards in the profession are reserved for the writer who has the ‘scoop’ (beats other reporters to revealing a big story) or the ‘exclusive story’ (has a story other reporters do not have). Exposés (also known as the in-depth story) come through diligence and painstaking investigation.

### *Ingredients of an Exposé*

- i. Multiple angles. Unlike a profile, the expose does not depend on one angle: it usually has multiple angles to it. An exposé is more or less like throwing up a can of worms. One major angle with several sub-angles or multiple angles are treated in one single piece.
- ii. Exemplification. The exposé necessarily contains details. In conventional feature style, the details are of the *facts of the case (what)*, whereas under the new journalism, the details are on *the form (how)*.
- iii. Facts and evidence. The feature must be fact- and evidence-based. In fact, it must have a strong news unassailable news peg.
- iv. Other feature ingredients: Anecdotes, quotes, action and cut-backs are used frequently but they all follow a sequence.
- v. Little room for expressive language: An exposé tells it as it is, without embellishments and special polishing.
- vi. Conclusion. Although its conclusion is not a summary of the entire piece as it is in the Do-it-Yourself feature, an exposure must have a conclusion. This is the reason some scholars distinguish the *in-depth feature* from an *exposé*. An in-depth feature is a very detailed report of all sides to an issue while an exposé is an investigative feature that uncovers big news or scandal or fraud. The latter goes with a conclusion which may be implied or in form of a summary recap of the essence of the entire investigation. An exposé cannot end with a poser. It seeks to solve a ‘riddle’ and its final lines must prove that it has done just that. However, if aspects of the report require more investigations, the writer may so indicate in the conclusion as a poser. Example:

*The clique behind the unprecedented fraud in the nation’s matriculation examination is right inside the walls of the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Examination, JAMB. Members of this clique award scores to school-leavers – the higher the score the higher the charges. The Magazine’s investigations revealed that this rot is sustained by powerful faceless accomplices in high quarters in Abuja. Who are these accomplices? Only time will reveal their faces.*

### *The structure of an Exposé*

The broad approaches to writing an exposure are:

- i. Start from a particular to the general, or start from a general to the particular.
- ii. Use bridges, cutbacks, quotes, description, etc. to liven up the body of the story.
- iii. The writer must be a primary witness (a participant observant in part or in full) of the event being a reporter. He or she can then rely on secondary sources for the remaining facts of the story.

## **3.2 DO-IT-YOURSELF AND SPECIALIZED FEATURES**

Another word for this kind of feature is ‘the educational feature’. It is a feature written to enlighten or teach the reader to learn news skills – how to play golf, cooking, animal husbandry, wedding plan. Some magazines are entirely do-it-yourself-oriented in content – *Good House Keeping* is for instance one of the world’s leading magazines. That is why this kind of feature is also sometimes referred to as ‘specialized features’. Specialized features treat special subjects. Most Nigerian newspapers have special pages for ‘technical’ subjects – oil and gas, education, stock market, tourism and commerce, etc.

### *Ingredients of the Do-it-Yourself and Specialized Features*

- i. Facts: Do-it-yourself features must be very factual. Thorough research needs to be done to authenticate the accuracy of information being provided. Such facts must also be up-to-date. Do-it-yourself features are usually written in the objective (rather than the subjective) format. Very skillful writers can jump from objective to subjective formats within the same feature, but it is important to let the reader be able to know when you are writing in the objective and when you are in the subjective prose when writing a Do-it-Yourself Feature.
- ii. Narratives: This kind of essay is essentially descriptive but as the name implies, involves the use of narratives. Simple sentences will just be okay for a Do-it-Yourself feature. You need quotes, anecdotes and cutbacks to write this kind of feature.

- iii. Exemplification: Give plenty of examples on the knowledge you are trying to pass across.
- iv. Technical words. Specialized features particularly require the use of technical words. You cannot run away from those words and terms but you must state their meanings in parentheses. Writing a feature for a Law Page is very different from how you write a feature of a court ruling on the general news page (news feature). A news feature on a landmark judicial case (or an exposé on it) would simplify technical legal jargons such as *interlocutory injunction, mitigation plea, prima facie evidence, suspended sentence*. But in Do-it-yourself or Specialized Features, these terms are allowed because the audience is expected to be familiar with them.
- v. Know thy audience: Perhaps the most important question the writer needs to answer first is ‘who are reading (or likely to read this)? Your reader-profile will automatically determine your language and style, even your choice of words.

### ***The Structure/Organisation of a Do-it-yourself Feature***

Do-it-yourself and Specialized features are written exclusively in the conventional style. It is akin to academic writing in which formality is the norm. It usually takes the following steps:

1. Choose a topic or subject. If you are writing under a regular theme (e.g. motoring), your subject is already known and you are left with choosing a topic (e.g. handling battery-related problems).
2. Determine the rhetorical context. What is the purpose of the feature and who do you expect to read the feature? From this you can choose any suitable writing style: argumentative, in-depth, comparison, contrast, exemplification, narration, description, etc. or a combination of these traditions. For instance, your rhetorical context may allow you to use the pronoun ‘you’ in the feature or ‘she’.
3. Establish a working thesis. A *thesis* is a sentence or group of sentences that states the controlling idea of the writer. It tells the reader what will follow and the possibilities that lie ahead in the article. It is the road map of the feature. Example:

*This week, we shall examine 23 battery-related problems that motorists often encounter.*

If the subject requires definition, do not define too broadly, too narrowly or circularly:

*Journalism is the noble profession of writing.* (Too broad, where do you place literature for instance?).

*Journalism is the art of printing and circulating news.* (Too narrow, where would you place broadcasting, wire service and the Internet?)

*Journalism is the art of publishing journals.* (This is a circular definition – use are using the words you are defining to define).

4. The body of the feature focuses on the working thesis. Classification helps to make the entire piece linked and coherent. Ensure that you merge related ideas into appropriate classifications.
5. Use transitional expressions to tie up the body of the feature as follow:

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Expressions</b>
Addition	Also, in addition, too, moreover, and, besides, further, furthermore, equally important, then, finally
Example	For example, for instance, thus, as an illustration, namely, specifically
Contrast	But, yet, however, on the other hand, while, nevertheless, nonetheless, conversely, in contrast, still, at the same time
Comparison	Similarly, likewise, in the same way
Concession	Of course, to be sure, certainly, granted
Time	First, second, third, next, finally, afterwards, before, soon, later, meanwhile, subsequently, immediately, eventually, currently
Location	In the front, in the foreground, in the back, in the background, at the side, adjacent to, nearby, next to, in the distance, here, there, to the left, to the right, inside, outside
Result	Therefore, thus, as a result, so, accordingly



Summary	Hence, in short, in brief, in summary, in conclusion, finally.
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6. Conclusion: in Do-it-yourself features is best when presented as a summary sentence of the entire feature. A paragraph or two could re-cap the major points of the feature before the summary sentence. However, the writer can still exercise his or her writing skills in doing this in the following ways:

*Reinforce your thesis:*

Instead of repeating your thesis, the right approach here is to reinforce it.

**Drab thesis summary:** Thus, we have been able to examine 23 battery-related problems that the average motorists often encounter. Happy motoring!

**Right thesis summary:** You will be doing your vehicle a world of good if you check your battery and kick systems weekly and avoid letting the battery carry excess load.

*End with your own comment.* Example:

My candid opinion to a motorist regarding battery-related problems – based on experience – is this: Buy a good battery once-and-for-all and check it up with experts often. It saves you a world of troubles.

*Call the reader to action.* Example:

You will be doing your vehicle a world of good if you check your battery and kick systems weekly and avoid letting the battery carry excess load.

*Showing the aftermath.* This is very suitable if you are using the narrative style. For example in a feature on how to make ‘*obe’marigbo*; a herbal soup among the Ikale people of Ondo State, the writer may have explained in the body of the essay the various options of the fish that could be used for the soup. He or she can conclude, using the ‘showing the aftermath’ format:

Now help yourself to a delicious *marigbo* pepper-soup. If you chose dry fish instead of meat, you are in for a thriller: *Obe’marigbo* tastes best when sauced with dried local *abebe* fish and *ipere*, the local periwinkle.

*Using an authoritative quote.* Example (for a feature on ‘Suspended Sentence’ in a Specialized Law Page of a daily:

Professor Aminu Babayo concludes:

“Suspended sentence is an aberration in the quest for justice. It is a clever way to bring injustice into the justice process. What is the use sentencing a rogue to 35 years in prison when he would serve five months behind bars? The provision should be expunged from our Criminal Code forthwith.”

*Illustrative Text of a Do-it-Yourself Feature Written in the Conventional Style*

The following article by **Sola Oguntola** appeared in the *Nigerian Tribune* of July 23, 2009 under the Natural Health Page. It was titled, *Aloe Vera: Natural cure for psoriasis*.

If you have tried many different remedies to treat psoriasis with no luck, maybe Aloe Vera will be the last remedy you will need to try. For years, Aloe Vera has been used topically for minor burns, sunburn and insect bites, but in the last decade, however, there has been strong evidence indicating that Aloe Vera is a proven natural cure for psoriasis.

Originally from Africa, Aloe Vera is a succulent plant that has over 200 species and grows in arid regions all over the world. Able to thrive both indoors and out, this plant is a popular choice for home gardeners as it's easy to maintain and offers medicinal uses. Aloe leaves contain a clear gel that is often used as a topical ointment.

In a clinical study in support of Aloe Vera for the treatment of psoriasis, experts found that Aloe Vera had a cure rate of 83.3 per cent compared to placebo at 6.6 per cent. Overall, there was a significant reduction in all aspects of the psoriasis. Patients' psoriasis plaques reduced in number and there was reduced discolouration.

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The study carried out in Belgium in 1995 had 60 psoriasis patients participating in the double blind placebo-controlled study that had them apply 0.5 per cent Aloe Vera extract in a water-based cream. The cream or gel was applied to the affected area three times daily for five consecutive days at a time and for a minimum of four weeks.

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In their publication in the journal, *Tropical Medicine International Health*, they wrote, "the findings of this study suggests that topically applied Aloe Vera extract 0.5 per cent in a hydrophilic cream is more effective than placebo, and has not shown toxic or any other objective side-effects. Therefore, the regimen can be considered a safe and an alternative treatment to cure patients suffering from psoriasis."

Also, a recent research presented at the International Congress of Dermatology revealed promising results in the use of Aloe Vera to treat plaque psoriasis. In a study of 80 individuals, Aloe Vera treatment led to a greater reduction in psoriasis severity when compared to a topical steroid.

These are not surprising as Aloe Vera is known for its skin friendly properties from ages. Aloe Vera is used in many skin care products like creams, lotions, lip balm, soap and aloe gel for sunburn because of its beneficial healing and regenerative properties. It has been used topically for minor burns, sunburn, rashes, sores, herpes, athlete's foot and insect bites.

Studies show that consuming aloe in a pill or liquid form can relieve swelling and inflammation in the joints of arthritis sufferers. Also, there's scientific evidence to support the use of Aloe Vera as a laxative and in reducing dandruff when applied to the scalp.

Most people use Aloe Vera without experiencing any kind of adverse reaction. However, there is a word of caution: anyone with a known allergy to garlic, onions and other plants in the same family with Aloe Vera should avoid using it. Also, Aloe Vera shouldn't be used on severe wounds or burns. In addition, women who are pregnant or breast-feeding should avoid drinking Aloe Vera, as it may stimulate womb contractions.

### **3.3 Self-Assessment Questions**

1. Compare and contrast the requirements for writing an Exposé and a Do-it-Yourself Feature.
2. Outline in detail a feature on "Cheating among professional athletes" indicating the type of feature you are writing.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

Do-it-yourself Feature is almost always in the ‘conventional or traditional feature genre’. It is formal disciplined writing – a softer version of academic writing hence, there is very little room for embellishments unless they supplement *information*, the primary purpose of such features. The Exposé under the conventional journalism tradition is more or less of a detailed investigative news report. Emphasis is on unraveling the news. Under this format, an Exposé can be described as a detailed exclusive straight news report.

#### 5. Summary

- Characteristics of an **Exposé** written in the conventional format are: *Multiple angles in a single story; exemplifications, cutbacks and quotes in addition to cutbacks and multiple brigdes; anecdotes; facts and evidence; classification; strong news value and factual/evidence-based, possibly resulting from participant observation and other primary research.*
- The Expose Feature and Do-it-yourself Feature can use any or a combination of all lead types, depending on the subject matter and how creative the writer is.
- Characteristics of a **Do-it-yourself** feature almost always written in the conventional format are: Facts: Do-it-yourself features must be very factual. Thorough research needs to be done to authenticate the accuracy of information being provided; Narratives. This kind of essay is essentially descriptive but as the name involves the use of narratives. Simple sentences will just be okay for a Do-it-Yourself feature. You do not need quotes, anecdotes and cutbacks to write this kind of feature, unless they are specialized features; Exemplification: Give plenty of examples on the knowledge you are trying to pass across; Technical words: You cannot run away from those words and terms but you must state their meanings in parentheses; Know thy audience:Your reader- profile will automatically determine your language and style, even your choice of words.

## 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment

1. Write a *News Feature* and an *Exposé* of not more than 100 and 200 words respectively on the subject: “Commitment to learning among NOUN students.”
2. Cut out three Expose features and three Do-it-yourself features from any newspaper of your choice.

## 7.0 References/Further Reading

Awoyinfa M., and Igwe, D., (2003). *The Art of Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines*. Lagos: McDee Communications.

Okoye, I., (1998). *Feature Writing: Theory and Practice*. Lagos: Mic Pac Ventures Ltd.

Phar, Donald and Busceni, Santi V., (2005). *Writing Today: Contexts and Options for the Real World – brief edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATIONS****MODULE 3 - WRITING THE CONVENTIONAL FEATURE STORY****UNIT 3- OPINION FEATURES AND LITERARY FEATURES****1.0 Introduction**

In Units 1 and 2 of this Module we have seen that ‘conventional or traditional feature story style’ as a genre of journalism is based on traditional straight news writing format, examining writing News Features, Profiles, Exposes and Do-it-yourself Features. We shall now round off the Module by examining Opinion Features and Literary Features using the same genre. In the next Module (4), we shall then look at the same kinds of features using the New Journalism style. But don’t forget that we said Do-it-Yourself Features are almost always in the Conventional Style. Similarly, Sports Writing which we shall discuss in the next Module, ideally should be in the new journalism mould. For now, let us look at Opinion Features and Literary Features in the conventional approach.

**2.0 Objectives**

This Unit will enable you to:

- Explain the structure and style of writing Opinion Features and Literary Features.
- Write conventional feature stories in Opinion and Literary Features.

**3.0 Main Content: Writing Opinion Features and Literary Features****3.1 OPINION FEATURES**

Perhaps we should first note that some scholars do not regard the Opinion article as a feature. What else can it be, however? A feature is identified in the manner a story is arranged, hence an opinion can be written as a feature article.

An ‘opinion feature’ is the personal opinion of the writer written in the form of a feature. The opinion of a newspaper, known as *editorial*, can therefore be an

opinion feature if it is written in the *form* of a feature. A reporter covering series of event as an objective eye-witness whose views do not get into his or her reports can sit down after the entire event and voice a personal opinion (his own opinion now as an individual, not a reporter). When this is presented in the format of a feature article, it is known as an ‘opinion feature’. Most opinion articles are written in the conventional format. However, there are ‘new journalists’ in the media who prefer the contemporary literary approach.

### **Ingredients of the Opinion Article**

All opinion features – whether in the conventional or the new journalism form – have the same attributes. What separates the two genres is just the style of presentation. Below are the general ingredients of the opinion article:

1. It is based on reasoning:

The opinion article is a product of philosophy. Philosophy deals with Life in All Ramifications (LIAR) using the RACE concept i.e. Research, Analysis, Communication and Examination (Uyo: 2005). To philosophize means to think critically or to search for knowledge about issues of life. People reason in two major forms: through the **deductive** and **inductive** forms. Deductive reasoning starts from a general perspective on the subject-matter and moves to the specifics. Inductive reasoning looks at specific examples and then move to a general conclusion.

Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, describes deductive reasoning as *sylllogism*. Sylllogism concludes reason by combining a general principle (known as major premise) to a specific situation (known as minor premise) and then takes a *logical* conclusion. Below is an example:

All Nigerians are Africans (Major premise)

Dr. Bolu Folayan is a Nigerian (Minor premise)

Dr. Bolu Folayan is therefore an African (Conclusion).

According to syllogism, if both premises of statements in an argument are true, the conclusion must be valid. But if one of the premises is not true, the conclusion cannot be valid. Consider the following statements:

Some Nigerians are Africans (Major premise)

Dr. Bolu Folayan is American (Minor premise)

Dr. Bolu Folayan is therefore an African (Conclusion).

In the above example, the conclusion cannot be valid because there is a problem with the second premise. The two premises of an argument must be similar. There was a time the Federal Government, in justifying the increase in price of petrol compared its price per litre as less than the price of the same litre of CocaCola drink. Many writers quickly faulted the argument as being footed on a wrong premise. You cannot compare an orange with a fish and come out with a valid conclusion. Sometimes, too, the conclusion could be faulty:

Some Nigerians are Africans (Major premise)

Dr. Bolu Folayan is Nigerian (Minor premise)

Dr. Bolu Folayan is therefore an African (Conclusion).

The conclusion above is not necessarily valid because the first premise says “*some Nigerians*” not “*all Nigerians*” are Africans. So, the fact that Dr. Folayan is a Nigerian does not make him an African. He could be one of the Nigerians who are not Africans.

The inductive reasoning takes the reverse process. The thinker draws a general conclusion from a particular occurrence. For example:

Prof. Emeka Belejayan a brilliant Igbo scholar from Mgbidi Village

*(First premise)*

Dr. Chibuzor Nkem is an Igbo scholar from Mgbidi Village

*(Second premise)*

Dr. Chibuzor Nkem must be a brilliant scholar.

*(Conclusion)*

Unlike in the above argument where the conclusion is not valid (that Dr. Nkem is a scholar from Mgbidi does not necessarily make him brilliant like Prof. Belejayan), it is possible to make very sound argument through inductive reasoning. For instance, if the particular is a replica of the general, you can actually make a successful inductive reasoning. Example: *XXP Paracetamo* has been found to have a factory defect. Two persons recently died after taking the drug. You can conclude that *XXP Paracetamol* is not safe for consumption. This conclusion is valid because the same factory specification was used to



mass-produce all the *XXP Paracetamol*. A defect in one makes all the others defective.

2. Use of evidence: Writers build their thoughts and arguments with evidence, especially when making arguments. In fact, the reason some writers are highly-regarded as excellent writers is not because of how well they write but how well they marshal their arguments with evidence. An argumentative opinion article without concrete evidence is like flesh without skeletons: it hardly can stand. Pharr and Buscemi (2005) list three basic types of evidence:

Personal Experience: this includes the personal experiences and encounters of the writer and people well known to him or her.

Primary Research Resources: these are sources that the writer has developed through his or own initiative – interviews, surveys, telephone contacts, etc.

Secondary Research Resources: include data, opinions and other published commentary on the subject of the feature.

3. Analysis. Opinion features often require some forms of analysis. There are three types of analysis: *process analysis* (critical examination of how something operates); *causal analysis* (critical examination of what causes something to happen or to behave it does); and *inferences* – the conclusion a writer does from his or examination of the relationship between or among things, people or issues. When an inference causes a result to occur, it is known as ‘effect’; when it to causes it occur in some given situations, it is known as ‘impact’; when it is one of many other variables that could cause a result, it is an ‘influence’. Thus in making analysis, a good writer would not state that “the effect of randy lecturers on the performance of students’ but the ‘impact’ or ‘influence’ of randy lecturers on the performance of students.
4. Thesis and Antithesis. A writer builds comparison and contrast by building an anti-thesis in two principal ways: *point by point* (the writer examines both subjects in terms of the first point of comparison, then examines both in terms

of the second point, and so on); *subject by subject* (the writer examines fully the first of two subjects being compared and then fully examines the second.)

Good opinion writing is greatly enhanced by good logical reasoning. Ironically, however, even the very best writers wittingly use faulty logic (deliberately) to make arguments. Pharr and Buscemi have highlighted 17 logical fallacies that could be found in opinion features:

1. *Appeal to strong emotion, belief or prejudice*

Senator Craven has led the fight to preserve the integrity of the American flag. He is a true patriot. Re-elect Senator Craven this November.

The writer merely explored the emotional attachment of the American to the country's flag. What else has the Senator done? Is his love of the flag the best way to ensure his worth?

2. *Appeal to the unknowable*

Yes, the film *Topocat* has careless, haphazard editing, but the director and the editor clearly did this on purpose.

Unless evidence exists, how can we know the intentions of the director and the editor?

3. *Appeal to tradition*

We inherited marriage of first cousins from our forefathers. It is a popular tradition that should be supported by all.

That we inherited the practice from our forefathers does not make it popular. Even if it is popular, popular practice is not necessarily right.

4. *Appeal to the certain rather than the uncertain*

As far as I am concerned, our goalkeeper, Agbona Basket, has done well despite conceding 5 goals in a match until we get a better alternative.

That we have not got a better alternative does not make Agbona Basket a good goalkeeper.

5. *Use of red herring*

Coach Akeem Lawal may not have won a match in 20 matches that he superintended for the national team. Yet, we cannot forget how he won the Nation's Cup for us in 1974 playing for the same national team.

This is a diversion. We are talking about his performance as a coach not as national team player.

6. *Appeal to false authority*

Gov. G.S. Ogbologbo is clearly the most honest governor in the country. Even the vibrant anti-corruption agency, EFCC, has not found him guilty of any corrupt charges.

The fact that EFCC has not found Gov. Ogbologbo guilty does not mean that he is an honest man, much less the most honest governor. It could be that he had been one corrupt Smart Alec!

7. *False attack (ad hominem attack)*

How on earth can you expect a governor with six wives to perform well office?

The connection between how many wives a governor has and his good performance is a logical fallacy in the above example.

8. *Oversimplification*

I cannot accept the argument that the economy is biting so hard. Have you seen Nigerians picking food from the dust bin?

The writer simply trivializes an important issue: Must Nigerians eat from the dustbin to ascertain the economy had been biting hard?

9. *Begging the question*

**Mr. Jackson:** John, do you know anything about African jazz?

**John:** Mr. Jackson, if you don't know anything about African jazz, don't mess around with African jazz.

Clearly, John did not address the question.

10. *Asking a loaded question*

Dr. Abel, do you still have sex from your patients after the Medical Association's intervention in the case?

If Dr. Abel says 'yes', it is bad; if he says 'no' it is bad enough.

11. *The either/or simplification*

It is either we let the National Judicial Council elect the chairman of the National Electoral Commission or the President appoints him or her.

The writer has limited us to only two options. There are several other ways through which the chairman of the electoral body may be appointed or elected.

12. *Using correlation for causation (post hoc, ergo propter hoc).*

Every time the President comes to the stadium to watch the Eagles, they always win their matches. The President must never miss watching the Eagles in the Stadium.

The President's attendance did not cause the Eagles' victory.

13. *The slippery slope claim.*

If we do not try election riggers in the next local government elections, Nigerians can be assured that there will be no governorship election thereafter.

The slippery slope claim maker believes one change can lead to another more horrible change when in fact there may be little or no relationship between them.

14. *Hasty generalization*

That Mikel and Obafemi could stroll into the Eagles camp three days after the deadline illustrates how rotten members of our national men football team are.

The blame of two players cannot be extended automatically to 22 players.

15. *False analogy*

The Governor has done well – five of his commissioners won distinguished good performance awards recently.

Even if the commissioners did well and got credible awards, it is illogical to link their performance to the governor's.

16. *Non sequitur. (The conclusion does not follow)*

I should get a pay rise at the end of this evaluation. After all I got a raise in my last three evaluations.

17. *Omitting vital information.*

John Doe is the best candidate for the job: a Harvard scholar, industrialist and businessman who until recently was the MD of Bank of the South West.

The writer conceals very important information (without stating a falsehood): Truth is that John Doe was actually sacked as bank MD recently. The writer concealed the information in order not to weaken his proposition.

Apart from logic, opinion, repetition device, contrast device, tone, organisation (flow) and figures of speech are used by opinion writers to present opinion.

***Illustration:***

The Opinion Feature below is written in the *conventional genre*. *My lines are underscored:*

### 3.2 THE REVIEW OR LITERARY FEATURE

A review is a critical analysis of an artistic or intellectual work. It is different from the academic or intellectual reviews presented at conferences or published in academic journals. Here the writer provides vital *information* about the work. According to Okoye, there are seven kinds of reviews in journalism publications:

1. *Books* (Fiction – novels, poetry and drama; and non-fiction – biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, textbooks, commentaries, Who’s Who, maps, yearbooks, directories)
2. *Musical Production* – new musical audios and videos, musical concerts, orchestra performances, Christmas carols
3. *Dramatic Performances* – plays, recitations and dance drama
4. *Cinema Productions* – feature films, documentaries
5. *Broadcast Media Productions* - radio, TV, video, Internet productions
6. *Fine and Applied Arts* – paintings, cartoons, sculpture, crafts and decorations, etc.

Literary writing is a specialized form of features writing like the Do-it-Yourself feature. The writer must be very informed about the topic or subject in particular and about the field in general. For instance, for you to review a recent *reggae* music audio, it is not enough for you to have listened to the recording very well; you have to demonstrate a residual knowledge of reggae music generally. You also need to have enough background information about the artiste.

The complexity in literary feature is further underscored by the fact that almost every sub-section of the field requires its own form of technical jargons. To review a novel or drama,

you need to have more than elementary knowledge of what is known as a plot, a style, the climax, resolution, and so on. In a review of a film, you should be able to indicate if it is a tragedy, comedy, climax, irony, catharsis or epic. The following are general points to note:

1. *Pick an angle of interest before writing.* Remember that you are writing as a journalist, not as a literary expert, and that you are writing primarily for your readers in general. What is the news or the most interesting aspect of the piece you want to construct?
2. *Make the intro very interesting.*
3. *Don't be judgmental unless you are an authority on the subject.* Just because you are asked to review the works of Wole Soyinka or Bob Marley does not make you an expert on plays and reggae music respectively. You therefore not expected to indicate that the work is good or bad unless you are an authority. You are expected to review in such a way that the reader will know if the new work is good or bad. For example, you can imply that a new music album is good by the number of sales within one week or by the comments of an authority.
4. *Give all necessary credits.* Credit is compulsory in creative works and so must be reviews of creative works. Indicate the names of producer, song writer, musicians, etc. as appropriate or relevant in reviewing a musical work.
5. *Appeal to the relevant human senses of the reader.* If you are writing a musical review, appeal to the ears of the reader. If you are reviewing paintings, appeal to the reader's eyes. A good reviewer must be good at 'narrating and describing'.
6. *Economy of words.* Note that in conventional-styled reviews, there is little or no room for embellishments. You are to report the event as straight news, more or less.

Fiction (short stories and novels) are narratives that are not based on real events. They are products of the author's imagination or "imaginative re-creations of real events" (Pharr and Buscemi, 2005).

Although some poems are narratives, most poems are not. To review poetry, the writer must pay special attention to language, interpretation and imagery.

### ***Illustration:***

Below is a literary feature written by Nigeria's most experienced literary journalists, Benson Idonije. The feature appeared in *The Guardian* of August 14, 2009.

### **Good Shots, bad shots on the airwaves**

TIME was when it was a serious crime for a broadcaster to "murder" somebody's name on the air, but unfortunately, the sanctity that surrounded this phenomenon, and which demanded that names be pronounced correctly no matter what, is now being daily desecrated. People's names are being wrongly pronounced with impunity.

The unfortunate aspect of this shortcoming is that it has been accepted as the norm, something that does not really matter. Otherwise, how do you explain the fact that a newsreader on the 10 o'clock news (Channels TV) failed to call the Yoruba name, Otitolaju, correctly last week. In fact, even though this is grievous enough, the greater crime was that the newsreader laughed it off jocularly, as if it is a legitimate thing to do. A second opportunity came for amends to be made at the end of the interview - while signing off; and the same error repeated itself, with the same impunity.

Mr. Otitolaju was on the station to provide information as background details for one of the major news items. One of the ethics of the profession is to ensure that people's names and places are pronounced correctly in view of the fact that whatever information you hear on the airwaves must be absolutely correct and should be taken by viewers and listeners as sacrosanct.

It is however strange that interviewees themselves whose names are usually wrongly pronounced do not ever complain. This makes the situation really dangerous and hopeless. Time was when people would snap back at broadcasters who made these mistakes saying, "My name is so, so and so, and not ABCD'. The broadcaster would make the correction on the air immediately and would guard against future embarrassment of this nature. But the fact that the owners of the names don't care any longer indicates that the whole thing has degenerated into a big joke; and if care is not taken, everything will go down the precipice.

Taking the day's broadcasting into consideration, the morning and evening belts are still the peak listening periods. While radio only enjoys massive listening in the morning - in traffic, by vehicle drivers going to work, television makes itself available at both times, the morning belt existing only for holiday makers, housewives, pensioners, the unemployed among others. Most of the radio stations listened to last week were inundating their early morning prime times with quizzes and panel games, which attracted prizes. True, this programme will attract audiences for the money they need to win; they would not listen for its entertainment value. I think that stations should play down on these quizzes and competitions on the early morning belts and concentrate more on entertainment. News, tit bits, traffic situation, prices of commodities, press review, sport news, should dominate these programmes



which should be driven by a variety of musical styles that include the latest from home and abroad.

There is really no excuse not to play Nigerian music today. Hip-hop, which is the in-thing, has improved in recent years in terms of identifying with our traditional culture. Hip hoppers are now Africanising the music, using Afrobeat as a vehicle for self-expression. Melodic and rhythmic progressions are beginning to assume dimensions that are rooted in Nigerian music. But for ideal broadcasting for ideal entertainment, varying the styles of music is the best option at this time because the early morning programme is of general interest; it is not targeted specifically at the youth.

Gbenga Aruleba of African Independent Television (AIT) was in his elements last Tuesday morning on the "Focus Nigeria" programme which takes the form of news interviews. The most interesting aspect of this programme is the topicality of the issues, but two other basic aspects have continued to enhance the success of the programme which runs from Monday to Friday.

In the first place, the interviewees selected are the right people. They are usually the personalities directly holding information that Gbenga wants to elicit. On the other hand, it is the interviewer's ability to ask the right questions that has continued to help the programme provide the useful information and education. The face-off between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the government was discussed last Tuesday. The interviewer demonstrated a deep knowledge of the issues at hand; and from the way he handled the various interviews, it was obvious that Aruleba had done his research thoroughly and was asking his questions from a position of knowledge, which was his strength.

However, it was not quite entertaining on Murhi International Television (MITV) last Tuesday morning. At the point that I started viewing and listening, two women were discussing marriage partners, how and why couples should be counselled before their marriages and the rationale behind it.

It was an interesting topic in Yoruba. One of the flaws was that the language was not properly articulated for the target audience. The programme was in the language - meaning that it was targeted at Yoruba speaking audiences, some of whom would not even understand English. But what happened was that it was English that dominated the discussion in the process of mixing the two for communication. If the programme is in Yoruba, core Yoruba-speaking experts should handle its discussion. They did not impress anybody with the mixture of the two languages.

Secondly, the programme did not obey any specific format and, so, it was difficult to harness information objectively for any purpose. The two women



were just chatting, each adducing reasons and proffering solutions. They both made valid points, but what was all of it out to achieve as a programme?

There are two ways in which the programme can best be produced and presented for optimum viewing and success. As an interview, an expert on the topic could be invited who would answer all the questions. On the other hand, the programme could take the form of a discussion - a panel discussion.

The success of the discussion would depend on a number of factors. Care must be taken to select three to four discussants that are knowledgeable about the issue of marriage. A social worker, lawyer and cleric are suggested discussants. The views of all these people would be harnessed and elicited by a moderator, who must have done his or her research on the subject. No matter how knowledgeable the discussants are, if the moderator does not do his research into the subject matter thoroughly, the programme would fail because elicited information would depend solely on questions asked by the moderator.

At 10am on Tuesday, the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) broadcast a programme, which at first looked like an interview, with Dr. Fatima Hamishi Adamu. But elements of the documentary came into it sometime later when tributes began to come from her ex-students and friends.

An interview could be used as an insert in a documentary, but it must be short, the interview would serve the same purpose as the contributions from the various people who paid their tributes.

Besides, the programme was not properly produced to portray a documentary, there was no proper brief to educate the audience, a brief in terms of the aim of the programme and what it was out to achieve. It did not say why a documentary was being done on the great lady; and the overall torment the programme received did not quite do justice to the life, times and achievements of Mrs. Adamu, which the documentary was obviously out to highlight.

However, it was a wonderful viewing point time on *MITV* when the station later broadcast a specialised magazine programme on a “Micro Finance Bank”

The programme required more confidence in terms of presentation from the presenter, otherwise the production served a useful purpose; and it was quite objective. Even though they were just two items, which were doubled to make four, the approach was relevant to the overall objective of the programme. The Chief Executive Officer of the bank opened the programme with the aims and objectives of the bank, including its achievements.

The second item featured customers, some of whom complained bitterly about the operations of the bank. One customer complained that the bank refused to pay him his money. The programme brought back the C.E.O and a senior staff of the bank as stakeholders in the light of the allegations levelled against them - to marshal their defence.

The fourth item brought back the customers who explained the extent of their patronage. This time, the presenter wanted them to proffer solutions, which could help to chart a new course for the way forward.

### 3.3 Self-Assessment Questions

1. Distinguish the following forms of features when written in the conventional style in a tabulated format, stating the characteristics of each: News Features, Profiles, Expose, Literary, Opinion and Do-it-yourself Features.
2. What, in your view, is the best form of feature for the following topics or subjects, using the conventional or traditional feature format:
  - i. Nigeria 1960-2010
  - ii. Militancy in the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria
  - iii. Fruit-sallad can add spice to your dinner
  - iv. 48 hours in Cairo
  - v. Another look at the sacking of Bank CEOs
  - vi. Osun Osogbo Festival in perspective
  - vii. There is a bandit at the Government House

December 25: More than just a day?

### 4.0 Conclusion

Opinion features and literary features (written in the conventional format) are related in the sense that they both could be subjective, interpretative and topical. However, opinion articles are based more on reasoning and evidence. Unless the writer of a review is very skilled and knowledgeable on the subject, his or her article is supposed to be objective and not subjective. Writers who are authorities on the subject, however, can make judgmental views on the works they review.

## 5.0 Summary

An *Opinion feature* is a journalistic presentation of the view of a writer. It is different from other kinds of features mainly because it is entirely subjective – although, the writer may be writing from his or her own objective viewpoint. It also involves the use of reason and evidence as platforms. A writer can manipulate reason in at least 17 ways to convey his views about an issue, person or thing (without necessarily lying). Conventional forms of opinion articles are straight expression of viewpoints of the writer.

viii. *Literary feature* (or the review) is a feature article of an artistic work or event from the journalistic viewpoint. It is thus objective (not subjective) form of writing. Even when the writer expresses personal opinions in a review, such views are still objective viewpoints of himself or herself being an expert. When written in the conventional form, the literary feature is like a detailed news report of an artistic work or event, e.g. proceedings of a Carol service; report of a come-back launch by a popular musician. Knowledge of the subject or object of report is compulsory to write good reviews.

## 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment

1. Write a review of not more than 200 words on Wole Soyinka's *Jero Plays*.
2. Analyze an article by four opinion writers – one in each of *THIS DAY*, *Punch*, *Tribune* or *Guardian newspapers* and compare the four articles in terms of the logicity of reasoning and use of evidence by the authors.

## 7.0 References/Further Reading

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**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATION****MODULE 4 - WRITING THE FEATURE STORY (NEW JOURNALISM STYLE)****UNIT 1 - LITERARY FEATURES AND OPINION FEATURES****1.0 Introduction**

So far, in this Course, you should have understood two things about journalism publications very clearly: One, features constitute between 70 and 80 per cent (or more) of journalism publications; Two, features can be on various subjects (news, travel, towns, events, issues, people, etc) but there are two traditions in which the writer can present features (whatever the subject) – traditional/conventional or new journalism.

Remember that we said that the traditional or conventional form of features borrows from the straight news tradition. It only allows the writer little room to express himself or herself. However, new journalism allows the writer to express himself or herself as a novelist would – creative structure of the story, choice of words, liberty to describe, etc. Through the various assignments so far, you should be able to boast that you can write news features, profiles, exposes, do-it-yourself, opinion and literary features in the conventional format. If honestly you cannot do this, I advise you to go over the three units in Module 3 again. This is because this Module (Module 4) is a build-up from Module 3. Someone who cannot write a simple feature in the conventional format cannot write effectively in the new journalism style. It is like someone who cannot add and plus two (2+2) being asked to sum  $2-2+2x^2$ .

**2.0 Objectives**

This Unit will enable you to:

- Describe the structure and style of writing Opinion Features & Literary Features *based on the News Journalism style*.
- Write reviews and opinion features using the new journalism style.

### 3.0 Main Content

Module 3 Unit 3, where we looked at Literary Journalism, was a good point to transit to this Module (in which we shall examine how to write various kinds of features in the new journalism style) because the basic skills a journalist needs to write in the new journalism genre are *literary skills*. It is doubtful if one can write in the new journalism genre without having literary skills. This explains why we are taking Literary Journalism as the first Unit in this Module.

#### 3.1 LITERARY FEATURE (NEW JOURNALISM STYLE)

Read the following feature article by Mike Awoyinfa:

##### ***Behold, the new Bob Marley***

*By Mike Awoyinfa (National Concord)*

*He is a phoenix, a songbird born out of the ashes of Bob Marley's death. He takes Bob Marley's song, Redemption Song, and soars with it into the azure sky, then comes down with it, down to the disco floor, turning a spiritual song into foot-stomping dance music.*

*Some even say his own version of Redemption Song has more appeal than that of Bob Marley. Just as you are thinking there can never be anyone like Bob Marley in the reggae music world then comes Majek Fashek (Majekodunmi Fasheke), a supernova sent from heaven right to Nigeria to step into Bob Marley's shoes.*

*He comes on stage, light-complexioned like Marley, a cap crowing his deadlocks, a bell in hand and chiming the bell like the New Testament prophet, John the Baptist, and asking his listeners to "Repent, for the Kingdom of Jah is at hand."*

*Fashek is no precursor. He is no forerunner foretelling the advent of a greater prophet. He is the prophet himself, the long-awaited messiah who would take Nigerian pop music out to conquer the outside world.*

*Not since the time wonder-boy Kris Okotie - now turned a reverend – has a musical genius emerged out of Nigeria. Fashek is talented. He is a joy to listen to. He restores into pop a sense of joie de vivre.*

*“There is no difference between his voice and that of Bob Marley,” says Tera Kota, himself a reggae star. “He is infusing a lot of disco flavour into reggae. I particularly appreciate his own (sic) version of Redemption Song. I will go for his.”*

*“He would rise to superstar status,” says disc jockey Stagger Lee. “You think it’s Bob Marley born again. Nobody can do Redemption Song the way he did. I think it’s as good as Bob Marley’s. I played it on BBC London last October and I got three calls asking for details. The melody of his songs are (sic) so beautiful, so palpable that you can physically hold and romance the songs.”*

*“The guy just sounds like Bob Marley,” remarks ace producer Telles Nkono. “A lot of Bob Marley’s fans should embrace this new album.”*

*The album being referred to is “Prisoner of Conscience” which is Fashek’s debut album. It was produced by Lemmy Jackson, with Teles Nkono and Fashek himself as co-producers.*

*Fashek used to be the lead singer of the reggae group Ja’stix, but due to contractual problems the group had with Japex Records, he had to go out and sign a solo album contract with Tabansi Records.*

*The result is the superlative album which has instantly catapulted Fashek to the reggae music throne of Africa.*

The above is a review or literary feature in the new journalism genre. Before we examine the characteristics of this kind of feature, let us also look at the same feature written in the conventional format:

### **Majek: New reggae artiste hits the form of his life**

*A former member of the reggae group, Ja'stix, Majek Fashek is taking the Nigerian music scene by storm with his first solo album 'Prisoner of Conscience'.*

*Most Disc Jockeys, presenters, listeners and viewers have simply fallen in love with the multi-instrumentalist who has been described as "Bob Marley reincarnated."*

*"There is no difference between his voice and that of Bob Marley," says Tera Kota, himself a reggae star. "He is infusing a lot of disco flavour into reggae. I particularly appreciate his version of Redemption Song. I will go for his."*

*The album, released on Tabansi record label has four tracks – all of them hits: Redemption Song (a reworking of an award-winning number by reggae legend, Bob Marley), Send Down the Rain (the monster-hit in the album), Let Righteousness Cover the Earth and Religion is Politics.*

*Stagger Lee, a renowned disc jockey, said of the new star: "He would rise to superstar status. You think it's Bob Marley born again. Nobody can do Redemption Song the way he did. I think it's as good as Bob Marley's."*

*"I played it on BBC London last October and I got three calls asking for details. The melody of his songs are (sic) so beautiful, so palpable that you can physically hold and romance the songs."*

*Light-complexioned and dread-locked Majek (real name Majekodunmi Fasheke), who played keyboards and base guitar on the album, co-produced by Nkono Teles (who also co-produced reggae star Tera Kota with award-winning producer Lemmy Jackson) wrote all the songs in the album, except Redemption Song.*

*When next you hear a powerful vocal on the radio that sounds like the legendary Bob Marley, it could be the unmistakable – sorry, the mistakable – voice of Majek Fashek.*

You found both articles interesting and informative didn't you? But did you notice the glaring differences in style between the two? The first article by Awoyinfa was written in the new journalism style; the re-work by the author was in the conventional style. What are the striking features of a review using the new journalism style?



- h. There is a plot. Awoyinfa chose to explore the perspective angle – the fact that for a long time, there had not been any artiste with such huge impact. The rest of the paragraphs were scenes of this main plot. He could have also looked at other angles such as the quality of the album, the message in the songs, etc. The conventional rework did not have a plot. It summarizes the news value in feature format, paying only scathing attention to details. It is like what is known in literature as theme: the controlling idea of the feature.
- i. Awoyinfa was descriptive. He wrote the story like a novel. The writer pays attention to details – the details that would be ‘unnecessary’ in the conventional approach. Although Awoyinfa, in the article, also used the narrative, his description was in-depth. But notice that in the conventional styled rework, the writer still included details that are not allowed in straight news reports or even news features.
- j. The writer used anecdotes. Not all new journalism features are humourous. But the story must be amusing to qualify as ‘new journalism style’.
- k. There is liberty of grammatical form and style. Awoyinfa used short sentences, long sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, clauses, plenty of adjectives and conjunctions to dramatize the plot he had created from the onset.
- l. Demonstration/Dramatization. Awoyinfa wrote so that the reader could see and feel what he was saying about Majek Fashek; the rework by the author (conventional style) narrates. A writer using the conventional style to review a music album, for example, could indicate that the work is pleasing to the ear but the writer using the new journalism technique to review the same work must go beyond that to prove that the work is pleasing to the ear. He or she would almost squeeze water out of stone such that the reader would be hearing the music by reading the piece.
- m. Quotes and facts. The new-journalism-styled feature contained quotes to liven the feature but less facts. There is hardly any new information for the reader to digest. The author assumes that the reader must have heard about the name of the artiste and the album, but that there is something else...

### 3.1.1 The Tools of Literary Features

The following are the tools for writing literary features (some of which Mike Awoyinfa used in the article in reference). Note that these same tools are used in writing other kinds of features (Do-it-Yourself, expose, opinion, sports, profiles, news features), which explains why the new journalism technique is also referred to as *literary journalism*.



1. *Alliteration*

Here the writer uses consonants that sound alike. E.g. ‘the crow’s cackling caw.’ It is also known as *consonance*.

2. *Allusion*

This is an indirect reference to a well-known person, work of art, or event. A *songbird born out of the ashes of Bob Marley’s death* is an allusion by Awoyinfa in the article on Majek Fashek.

3. *Setting/Plot*

The plot is the events that make up a narrative while the setting refers to the time and place of a narrative.

4. *Simile*

This is a figure of speech in which one thing is represented by or compared to another by using like or as... *a bell in hand and chiming the bell like the New Testament prophet, John the Baptist*.

5. *Symbol*

The writer uses an object to represent something else, usually an abstract concept. Illustration: *Sometimes being over-confident in our sincerity can lead us into trouble... like Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe’s best-seller, Things Fall Apart. Okonkwo brought out a pod of kolanut and told his visitors that his mind is as plain as what was inside the pod of kolanut. But alas! When he opened it, worms buds had almost eaten up the kolanuts. “You surely hate us?” the visitors said. Kolanut, in Igbo culture symbolizes unity and love.*

6. *Motif*

A motif is a recurring word, musical phrase or visual object with thematic significance. *He takes Bob Marley...He comes on stage... He is a phoenix...*

7. *Personification*

The writer uses human characteristics for non-human beings or things. E.g. *The bar beach has almost eaten up Victoria Island*. Another example: *Majek plays, sings like a phoenix*. When the writer uses one thing to represent or compares it with another without using ‘like’ or ‘as’, it is known as a *metaphor*. Example: *Majek is a phoenix*.

## 8. *Rhyme*

Sometimes a writer can go poetic even in writing a prose. A rhyme consists of matching sounds at the end of two or more lines. Example:

*Majek Fashek looks like Bob Marley on the reggae throne*

*His looks, dreadlocks and distinct voice prove kingship*

*Majek's version of Bob Marley's Redemption Song may be a clone*

*But can that take away the authority or flagship?*

There are several types of rhymes: *couplet*, *sonnet*, *doggerel*, etc. A *meter* is a patterned rhythm of stressed and unstressed syllables. Types of *meter* are: Iambic (two syllables with a stress on the second, e.g. 'collapse'); Trochaic (two syllables with stress on the first, e.g. 'apple'); Dactyl (three syllables with stress on the first two unstressed and the third stressed, e.g. 'tenderly') and Anapest: (three syllables with the first two unstressed and the third stressed.) Meters are used in traditional poetry, but are used often by new journalists.

## 9. *Satire*

A feature that ridicules the subject or object is known as 'satire'. It requires skill to write satires and the writer must be sure his or her reader is able to comprehend the message (because a satirist often appears to be saying the opposite of what he or she meant). Olatunji Dare, one of Nigeria's best satirists, many times run into trouble with his readers (even when he was writing for *The Guardian*, which has an elite audience). Many Nigerian feature writers used a lot of satires during the vicious Sani Abacha military regime, fearing reprisals from the regime. Some people argue that satirists are cowards but this is not generally true. Satire is often an entertaining and effective way to make a point. A classical example was Olatunji Dare's reply to a call that the national football team was being dominated by footballers from the then Bendel State. Dare suggested that in his own humble view, each position in the national team should be reserved for each state of the Federation and that in the run of play, a player must not make two consecutive passes to a player from his own state. He added that there should be 21 coaches to reflect the then 21 states of the Federation and the Chief Coach should be elected by the coaches. Satire better brings out the ineptitude of tribalizing a national team than any other style perhaps.

### 10. *Synecdoche*.

This is a figure of speech in which a part stands for the whole or in which a general term is used to describe a more specific actor or action. E.g. “*Five sails approach the harbor*” means “Five ships approach the harbor.”

### 11. *Metonymy*

A noun is used to evoke associated meaning. A good example is in the statement, “Those who live by the sword die by the sword.” Here the writer does not mean the person should possess a sword. He or she is talking about ‘being violent.’

### 12. *Irony*

In an ironic feature, the writer paints a difference between appearance and reality. A graphic description of a Pastor preaching about death or life after death few hours before he collapsed and died would represent an ironic piece. A dramatic irony is a device created when characters in a short story, novel, play or film discuss an issue at cross-purpose, each character has incomplete information. The characters do not realize that each is referring to a different set of facts. Only the audience knows all of the truth. The device’s power is due to this gap between the audience’s knowledge and the character’s knowledge. (Pharr and Buscemi, 2005:541).

### 13. *Caesura*

This is a stop, pause or break which appears in a prose when a comma or dash would ordinarily be placed. E.g. *He is a phoenix. A songbird. Guitarist. Call him anything a gifted musician is.*

### 14. *Onomatopoeia*

This is the mimicking of sounds in expression. E.g. *The tyres of his car screeched and there was silence except for the car’s clock making tick-tack.* Some writers create their own ‘onomatopoeic words’. E.g. ‘The next you heard was *gbuoh!*’

### 15. *Imagery*

Creating a mental picture for the reader to perceive what you are trying to pass across as message. You use all the human senses to create imagery in writing.

### 16. *Assonance*

The writer repeats vowel sounds. E.g.: *A Lagos-based plank-maker who yesterday killed his wife has been playing pranks with police detectives.*

### 17. *Conflict*

This is the struggle that shapes a narrative. There are three broad spheres of conflict: individual versus society; individual versus nature, and individual versus himself or herself.

### 18. *Denouement*

The period after a narrative's *climax* in which final questions and details are addressed. The *climax* is the moment at which the events in the narrative reach a crisis, usually near the end of the narrative. Although this is commonly used in novels and plays, literary writers use it to write non-fictions, exposes and opinion features. A creative sports writer can use climax and anti-climax to report a historic football match, for example.

### 19. *Foreshadowing*

The writer's use of hints in a narrative to suggest an upcoming event in the plot.

### 20. *Parody*

A parody is a literary work that imitates another literary work in order to ridicule it.

## 3.2 OPINION FEATURE (NEW JOURNALISM STYLE)

Sometimes, journalists write opinion features using the literary language. One of the best known literary opinion feature writers in Nigeria, Nosa Osaigbovo, wrote the following feature in his MOSAIC column in the *Nigerian Tribune* of August 14, 2009 (My comments are underlined in the text):

### **When AIDS comes home**

Bose Odukogbe, the young lady reportedly abandoned outside a state hospital for three days, would not have been surprised when told that she was dying of AIDS. She had lived dangerously, according to her father. She was a sexual pilgrim who worshipped at many shrines of sin.

(Topic sentence sets the theme/plot of the piece. Notice how the powerful sentence 'a sexual pilgrim who worshipped at the many shrines of sin' sets the tone for the contrast in the next paragraph.)

But who are we to judge her? Is there any human being free of moral maladies? Many people have shameful secrets. Some people are lucky enough to take theirs to the grave.

Like Bose, she is now in the grave, but her silence could not stifle her secret. Her flesh, sucked dry by the drought of disease, proclaimed her problem. She was dying of AIDS.

(Use of imagery: ‘sucked dry by the drought of disease’, ‘her flesh...proclaimed her problem’)

Unlike Bose, she was not footloose. She was married to a man she loved with a stolid steadfastness. There is something unhealthy about love of consuming intensity. It is sometimes a flame that burns reality, an escape into surrealism.

Her husband took cruel advantage of her devotion to him. He saw other women, some of them people she knew. He praised their skills and called her a cold fish.

When she began to lose weight, many people believed she was being eaten up by the worms of worry. Many women stick to a marriage in which they are subject to a storm of physical and emotional abuse. They do not seek the harbor of divorce. They cling to the marital reel of dubious respectability.

(Notice the author’s use of figures of speech, figurative expressions, adverbs and adjectives: ‘cruel advantage’, ‘dubious respectability’, ‘worms of worry’, ‘typhoid’ described as a ‘tyrant’ etc.)

Then it was said that typhoid was the tyrant terrorizing her body. Some people proudly carry the invisible scars of a typhoid attack. It is now apparently an important and desirable rite of passage to be attacked by typhoid. Many people boast about how serious their typhoid attack was. But typhoid is a very serious disease and often kills.

She was told that the disease she was suffering from was very serious. She had done a series of tests and had been told that she had HIV. This was revealed after her death.

She did not accept that she had been infected with HIV. She was a denial. When friends gently suggested to her that she might need to do “the test”, she said that it was unnecessary. She lived a lie, but the truth gradually became manifest. And the moment of truth was ugly.

She was a much loved woman. Her physical shrinkage alarmed her friends, though some of them had begun to suspect that she had HIV. But her husband was in excellent health and the mystery of how she came to contract the disease defeated them.

Her husband was largely indifferent to her suffering. Their children were in boarding school and a maid ran the home. But he had to do something when his wife became seriously ill.

He took her to hospital. He was told that his wife had full-blown AIDS and would be dead in less than two months.

It was said that the man wept, not for his dying wife but for himself. He was rich and had a huge zest for life. He believed he had the disease and had a short time to live.

(Notice the use of contrast in ‘it was said that the man wept, not for his dying wife but for himself’. The author heightens the reader’s expectation that the husband surely had the HIV virus and kept this to the next paragraph)

He was asked to do an HIV-test and the bouncer passed it! He has HIV-negative. This was not exactly surprising. He had stopped performing his conjugal duty for a long time. If he had tested positive for the disease, it would have been from one of his many lovers.

The man was told to return for another test in six months. He became a changed man. He was quiet, but not a man of sympathy. He had no kind word for his dying wife and his fingers did not stroke her burning brow. He told some friends that the woman he had so trusted had been unfaithful to him!

(Nosa is obviously good at using consonance and metaphor... ‘burning brow’, ‘dying tune of a lyre’ etc.)

His eyes, which taunted her in his triumph, told her that her secret was known. But she said nothing even when she could still speak. A time came when she could no longer speak, when groans became her words, when her life was slipping away like the dying tune of a lyre.

She lies in the grave like poor Bose, her fling proving fatal. Life is like that. Her cruel husband may live to be a hundred.

(The author ends with an anticlimax).

GENERAL COMMENTS: You will notice that in this opinion feature, Nosa Osaigbovo has not directly expressed his personal view about the episode he has recounted and featured in detail. This is the beauty of new journalism: skillful writing. Yet, his view on every issue in the discourse is clear. He used adjectives, adverbs and figures of speech to state his position, putting himself outside the event as if he is one person standing by aloof as the scenario unfolded. His use of exemplification and narration served his intention – to paint the plight of couples under the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

Now, let us look at another writer who used the same approach: Dan Agbese. The veteran writer, who like Osaigbovo is a master at writing imagery, wrote an

opinion feature published in *Newswatch* in April, 1985 (Underlined words are mine):

### **The Political Killer Grain**

SHEHU Shagari had a mission: to feed his hungry nation. He called his presidential ambition, tall as his own famous cap, Green Revolution. He chose the name advisedly, if eclectically. Before him, there was green revolution in the 1960s which heralded new miracle varieties of rice and wheat, regarded with all seriousness, as the ultimate weapons for a conclusive battle against hunger.

(Dramatic topic sentence. Notice the use of simile and choice of words... 'like his own famous cap', 'miracle varieties of rice and wheat')

Shagari's hope in his programme was no less total. In three years, he pumped some billion naira into the programme he believed would turn every brown blade of grass in the land into green food crops stretching, in all its lovely green splendour, far into the beautiful horizon.

(Use of contrast: 'believed he would turn every brown blade of grass in the land into green food crops stretching in all its lovely green splendour...')

The 1960s Green Revolution. A tough combination of inclement weather, unsuitable soil and pests stumped it. Shagari's own Green Revolution fared even worse. A poison arrow of ineptitude pierced its weak heart. The programme withered finally on the sturdy vines of corruption. The huge expenditures more or less yielded only fat interests in fixed deposit accounts. And the lovely petals of promise fell off and soon got lost in the dried leaves of hope that came from dead shrubs of intentions planted in sand.

Shagari's Green Revolution did not turn the land into a green belt of food crops. It turned it into something else - a large granary of imported rice. Shagari had brought a revolution, rice revolution. The nation was overwhelmed in more senses than one. The alarm went out to the world. Nigeria needed rice. Rice-producing nations of America and Asia responded. Ships took off from various ports for Nigeria. All of them loaded with rice. Rice assumed a new national significance. It became an essential commodity. It became a subject of intense rival politicking.

Precious gold. Valued as a child. Or perhaps more so. So much did Shagari attach his success as a president to the availability of rice in every corner of this country that he set up a Presidential Task Force under Umaru Dikko. Its task was to import rice from wherever it could be found and at whatever cost, to feed a nation hooked on rice like rats. (More figurative expressions introduced... 'precious gold', 'a nation hooked on rice like rats', and the denouement 'Shagari had brought a revolution, rice revolution', not through farming but via importation)

Rice became more than food. It became the magic grain for instant wealth. It turned its importers into multi-millionaires. It sapped the nation's foreign exchange and created a new class of the rich both here in Nigeria and other places from which shiploads of rice sailed for Nigeria. Rice farmers in Thailand, Pakistan and the United States never had it



so good. And Nigeria's foreign reserves never took so much knocking from what was anything but valuable food here.

The social significance of rice was vividly captured in a cartoon in the National Concord by Osazuma Osagie in September last year. A family room is flooded, a moustached man and his wife and their baby are there. So is a bag of rice. Without second thought, the man grabs the bag of rice, drops it on his shoulder and makes for the door and safety. His shocked wife protests. Unperturbed, the man shouts back: "Leave me bo, the baby can swim, rice can't."

(Dramatization)

In going for rice, Shagari went for his own political jugular vein. Rice revolution is a bad revolution. It has an uncanny way of burying its heroes. Rice nearly ended Sadat's presidency in Egypt before the bullets did it. But Sudan and Liberia had experiences that should have warned Shagari that no one takes on a rice revolution and survives it - at least not without serious political injuries. But Shagari and his political barons convinced themselves that all the nation needed was rice-long or short grain. And the nation's political support would be total. Soon everyone tended to believe that to eat rice was to be eloquently patriotic.

Patriotism in rice pots. Grainy patriotism. But it appealed to Shagari. Nigerians well-fed on rice were good, loyal party supporters. Anxious to ensure everyone had the stuff to eat, it enabled them, one suspects, to shout "One Nation, One Destiny!" until the hills came down and the moon was shattered. Shagari spared no expenses to import rice. Nigeria's lean foreign reserves were committed to rice importation under Dikko.

(‘New journalists’ use oversimplification and exaggeration (‘all the nation needed’, use of ‘everyone’ etc and plenty of adjectives - often they invent their own adjectives...’moustached man’, ‘patriotism in rice pots’, ‘grainy patriotism’, ‘until the hills came down and the moon was shattered’; ‘put his political fortunes in bags of rice’ etc.

Dikko presided over the armada with such belligerent arrogance that rice became a political axe: Political opponents were hacked to death with it. It was used to cow political opponents and win over new party supporters. The more rice Dikko bought, the more the nation wanted rice. The more rice was discharged at our ports, the more costly rice became, the more ferocious the struggle to buy it. Rice became a battle. And rice became: politics; bad politics. Rice enriched men and women. And it impoverished the nation. It drained foreign reserves. It made local rice farmers poor.

But Shagari was hooked. He could not stop rice importation. To do so was suicidal. His political opponents would use it as a knife to pierce through his political heart. But the indispensability of rice became the inevitability of his downward political journey. The daily queues of rice buyers painted a horrid picture of a hungry nation. The money spent on rice importation became a symbol of profligacy. In a way, Shagari fell because he put his political fortunes in bags of rice.

But rice importation continues. Albeit the noise is over. Clearly, no one has seen the last of rice. This precious grain known to scientists as *oryza sativa* has had a pernicious hold on the world for thousands of years. The Romans ate it, so did the Greeks.



And so did the Chinese and Indians thousands of years before Christ. Grown today in virtually all tropical and sub-tropical regions, rice is a multi-million dollar business. Every bag of it is money. Every grain of it is wealth. In the late 1970s the world produced 375 million metric tonnes of rice valued 65 billion U. S dollars. That was a lot more than wheat could command. Proof that rice is good food and it is good business. But bad politics.

To make itself indispensable, rice has moved from the cooking pot to the brewery industry. The Americans brew beer with it; Japanese brew *sake*, their potent equivalent of Nigeria's *ogogoro*, with rice.

(To write impressively, you need a little of humour and amusement.. how do you see 'rice...moving itself from the cooking pot to the brewery industry. Notice the use of comparison in an amusing manner: 'Americans brew beer with it; Japanese brew sake, their potent equivalent of Nigeria's *ogogoro*:'

The new craze for rice must be a surprise to the Argungu rice farmer in Sokoto. He depends wholly and entirely on rice - for money and food. He eats rice and he drinks rice. His breakfast is rice - *akamu* and *akara*; his lunch rice - boiled rice or mass; his dinner is rice - *tuwo*; his favourite local soft drink is rice *kunu*.

Third World rulers are in a dilemma. Rice is good food, needed in every home. But it is a political killer grain.

(Agbese ends the feature with a summary sentence that ties up its title and topic sentence. Notice again that Agbese completely put himself out of the narrative as if he is not expressing an opinion. Nosa Osaigbovo and Dan Agbese in these features never used the personal pronoun 'I think', 'my position is that', or 'should', 'ought to', etc. But their opinions are clear. In fact, the Federal Government of Nigeria banned the importation of rice five months after the feature appeared in *Newswatch*.)

### 3.3 Self-Assessment Questions

1. Write an introductory paragraph using the conventional form of an opinion feature on the topic PROSTITUTION.
2. Write an introductory paragraph using the new journalism form of an opinion feature on the topic PROSTITUTION.
3. What differentiates a Review written in the Conventional form from one in the New Journalism form?

## 4.0 Conclusion

Not all opinion feature writers write from the objective viewpoint. In fact, most of the opinions published in the nation's newspapers and magazines today are written in the subjective form in the first person pronoun – the writer states the issue and

his or her position on it and goes ahead to marshal his or her points to make his position intelligible, using logical arguments and logic. Journalists who prefer this approach write more in the conventional style. Others vary their styles, depending on the subject matter. New journalism affords the writer more latitude to express his or her opinion in more varied forms than the traditional feature techniques. He or she does not need many facts. Logicality may just be implied but not stated as premises. Evidence may be scarce. Yet, through literary writing the writer can make tremendous impact.

## 5.0 Summary

The soul of *literary journalism* as a genre of journalism writing is in blended essays presented in the literary form. It is a combination of several devices such as descriptive, narrative and figurative expressions with the writer's own personality.

Various elements used in literary devices including climax, denouement, irony, imagery, motif, simile, setting, imagery, etc, are used in writing the feature.

## 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment

1. Explain how you would go about writing an essay on the "The World of Vehicle Mechanics" in not more than 25 words.
2. Select any opinion article of your choice in a newspaper or news magazine (local or foreign) and write an analysis of not more than 100 words of the writer's style.

## 7.0 References/Further Reading

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**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATION****MODULE 4 - WRITING THE FEATURE STORY (NEW JOURNALISM STYLE)****UNIT 2 - NEWS FEATURES AND PROFILES****1.0 Introduction**

The new journalism style is like flying an airplane: the most difficult and most important stages are the take-off and the landing. The aircraft needs to gather enough pressure to move up, that's why you see it run as if it is possessed. But as soon as it stabilizes up in the air, the pilot and the passengers are told to "relax their seat-belts and enjoy their flights." When it is time for landing, everyone fastens their belts and care is taken to land. Writing in the new journalism style is much the same way. The take-off and the landing are very crucial. Once a writer gets the two in proper shape, the remaining challenge should be easy to handle.

**2.0 Objectives**

This Unit will enable you to:

- Understand the structure and style of writing News Features and Profile Features *based on the News Journalism style*. You should be able to write structures of features and choose suitable styles when you have fully digested this Unit.
- Write news features and profile features using the new journalism style.

**3.0 Main Content****3.1 NEWS FEATURES**

We pointed out in Module 3 Unit 1 that "the News Feature is an extended news report, essentially. It has all the attributes of news – informative, timely, prominent, unusual, odd, interesting, and consequential – except that, unlike a news report, it is not usually as brief as straight news." We added that in the conventional form, a

news feature is really a longer straight news report. But in the new journalism form, a news feature is a news report written in literary style.

We were taught in introductory News Writing Courses to run away from details, adverbs and adjectives when writing news. We were taught to state the important aspects of the news form and follow a sequence (pyramidal and inverted pyramidal structures) etc. A news feature written in new journalism breaks these rules. The writer is not confined to a particular way to write his or her news report. He or she can start from the least important to the most important or take just one element and leave out the rest, etc. It is about writing news *creatively*.

### **The Intro**

The greatest strength of a news feature in the new journalism style is the INTRO (first paragraph). Often, news features are written on issues of human interest, (soft news) although sometimes they may be written on hard news. The writer thus has to ‘power’ the intro for ‘the plane’ to take off properly. Two good tips for doing this are: *use strong verbs*, and *write the way you talk: in simple sentences*.

One element that makes ‘conventional intros’ boring is the use of ‘has’, ‘were’:

The Presidency has once again stated that the ongoing sanitization in the banking sector was not a Northern agenda, as it appears to welcome President Umaru Yar’Adua from his medial and religious trip to Saudi Arabia.

*(Nigerian Tribune August 25, 2009)*

The above intro is an example of an intro in the conventional news feature format. It is almost like a straight news intro. But it is not well-written. First, the reporter was not sure what the news kernel was – the banking sector or the President’s return. There is no reason to lump the two. Second, the use of ‘has’ waters down the intro. Third, too many ‘big’ words. The temptation most writers fall into in this regard is that they simply use the press statements given to them, retaining them almost word-for-word. Otherwise, how can ‘sanitisation’ have a place in an intro? The simple way to go about writing good intros is to say it out yourself as you would say it to a friend or your wife or a neighbour.

For example, the reporter who wrote the intro stated above may have jotted down the following points at the news conference that he reported:

- *The President is coming back from Saudi Arabia tomorrow. Presidency already making plans to receive him.*

- *The medical check-up he went for was ok.*
- *The Federal Government is not playing any Northern Agenda with the new policies in the banking sector*
- *“Government is aware of powerful interests who are affected by the reforms”*
- *“Well, those feelings that this thing is a northern agenda are laughable. How can anyone say that...that it is to weaken the strong hold of the southern part of the country on the economy.*
- *“I am aware there will be a few initial shocks and hiccups with Sanusi’s reform just as it happened during Soludo’s consolidation exercise.*
- *“Those affected will want to fight back. We are talking of very powerful vested interests here.*
- *“The President is convinced it is the right course of action by the CBN to avert what could turn out to be a national catastrophe in the financial sector and that is why Sanusi has his unwavering support.”*

From the above notes, the reporter only needs to look for his or her news pegs. There are several of them there in the notes: CBN intervention was to avert a national catastrophe; government expects powerful interests to fight back; the president is coming back home after successful medical check up; CBN action not a Northern agenda.

The medical trip ‘peg’ is good but there is little information available. It cannot stand on as an intro, unless the reporter would want to support it with more research and interviews. We can take any of the other pegs. Let us assume that we settle for the ‘catastrophe’ angle. How are we likely to tell a friend or neighbours?

The recent action of the Central Bank was to prevent a big problem in the economy. That was what Olusegun Adeniyi said yesterday.

That gives us the kernel of the intro. Writing an intro is as simple as that: write it as simply as you talk; then, ‘format’ it. What is left is just to put it in Newsman’s language (put in strong verbs, anecdotes, replace abstract and weak words etc):

***(Intro – Conventional Form)***

The banking sector could be in ruins if the Central Bank failed to wield its big stick two days ago, The Presidency said yesterday.

Note that other strong words for ‘failed’ are: ‘refused to wield’, ‘declined to wield’. Note also how we have changed ‘catastrophe’ to a simpler and more effective word, ‘ruins’. ‘Clean-up’ is better and more powerful than ‘sanitization’.

***(Intro – New Journalism Form)***

Presidential spokesman Olusegun Adeniyi says the ethnic colours being given to Central Bank’s recent sack of five bank CEOs is a big joke. But he doesn’t find the joke funny at all.

“Well, those feelings that this thing is a northern agenda are laughable. How can anyone say that...that it is to weaken the strong hold of the southern part of the country on the economy?”

“I am aware there will be a few initial shocks and hiccups with Sanusi’s reform just like it happened during Soludo’s consolidation,” he told journalists at the Presidential Villa.

Adeniyi spoke of how The Presidency expected a “fight back” from “vested interests” but was sure it would amount to mere shadow-boxing.

The new journalism gives the reporter the liberty not to be in a hurry to say everything; to capture the way the news object expressed views (by retaining ‘well...’), by removing ‘exercise’ from the quote, because it is a superfluous word from the original ‘Soludo’s consolidation exercise’ the way he had recorded it in his notes, etc. The reporter used the half-quote to vary the sentence structure and ‘let’ his reader into the venue of the press conference instead of reporting it in paraphrases. ‘Has said’ or ‘has stated’ puts the news in the participle. Modern intros are written in the present or present continuous tense to enhance their currency. The writer created an anecdote...’fight back...mere shadow-boxing.’ etc.

Consider how a writer with the *Nigerian Tribune* treated a court case in its report of August 5, 2009:

An Action Congress witness who told the Governorship Election Petitions Tribunal in Osogbo on Tuesday that he was a lawyer gave two conflicting years as the year he was called to the Bar.

The witness, Jonathan Adewumi, informed the tribunal that he was called to the Bar seven years ago and gave the actual year as 2005.

He could not give the names of any of his mates at the Law School and said he could not remember the name of the person who signed his call to the Bar form.

Responding to questions during cross-examination by Alex Izinyon, lead counsel for (sic) Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola, the witness also said he could not remember the names of his teachers at the Law School and could not remember the courses he offered.

He also could not give the name of the Head of Lagos Campus of the Law School which he claimed he attended.

The following were questions and answers between lawyers and the AC witness:

**Question:** Where do you live?

**Answer:** Oyan, Odo Otin Local Government Area, Osun State.

**Question:** You are a legal practitioner?

**Answer:** Yes

**Question:** You signed this deposition by yourself?

**Answer:** I don't know what you mean by that.

**Question:** (*Shows him the deposition*). You signed that yourself.

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** That deposition was signed by you on 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2007, at the registry of this tribunal?

**Answer:** Yes

**Question:** Your name on your deposition is Jonathan Adewumi

**Answer:** Yes.

Etc., etc.

Although there is room for improvement in the above news feature (for instance, on the imagery), there is no doubt about the intent of writer – to do it his own way to capture the essence of the event. And to a reasonable extent he succeeded in doing this through dramatization. Another writer may be more amusing – with emphasis on the anecdotes. Sampler:

A witness paraded himself as a lawyer at the Elections Petition Tribunal in Osogbo on Tuesday, but failed all five tests to prove he was one.

He could not recall the date he was called to bar, the name of his dean, the names of any of his course mates in the Law School – he didn't even know the meaning of 'deposition', what he came to court to defend.

"I don't know what you mean by that," the 'learned gentleman', Jonathan Adewumi, told counsel to Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola, Alex Iziyon, under cross-examination, who showed him a deposition purportedly signed by him.

The reporter can then begin the dramatic questions and answers. He would have captured the scene better if he or she described the non-verbal aspects of the event... 'the 'lawyer' looked up and down, gaped at the judge and replied: ' .he waited half a minute and retorted... ', ' now becoming a bit agitated, he blurted... ' ). You can always delay the other Ws and H to pay attention to details but you must keep the reader hooked to the news report.

In summary, writing a news feature in 'new journalism style' is the fad in the competitive newspaper and magazine journalism world. Not every story can be written in this format but a reporter who has a 'news sense' will know which feature style best fits the event he or she is witnessing. That is what makes him or her a journalist. More of these literary techniques will be discussed under in the remaining part of this Unit and the next Unit.

### 3.2 PROFILES (NEW JOURNALISM STYLE)

In Module 3 Unit 1, we listed the ingredients of Profile Features to include: story angle, sequence, quotes, anecdotes and action. We also listed special features of the profile feature structure to include cutbacks, engaging intro, classification and conclusion. The new journalism form of the profile feature shares all of these characteristics. Additionally, it includes the following:

- More descriptive and narrative presence of the writer. The 'new journalist' explores the five human senses – seeing, hearing, tasting, touching and smelling. Even when



he or she allows the personality to do most of the talking, the writer uses injections, quotes, classifications and descriptive notes to spice the talk.

- The personality of the writer may play into the profile. Occasionally the writer can make himself or herself part of the story:

*‘And why did you not take the offer?’ I asked Chief Gbadiye, watching his familiar ear-to-ear grin.*

- Extra effort to know the personality or object of the profile. To write a profile feature using the new journalism style, you must have researched so well that almost all of the things the interviewee tells you will not be news to you. This will certainly reflect in the quality of your questions as shown in the following example in a profile of Prof. Wole Soyinka:

Prof. Soyinka appears to be more popular for his plays, but literary giants think his greatest talent is in prose.

Said Prof. Femi Osofisan, a literary luminary of international repute: “If he did not write all those plays, he could still have won the Nobel Prize for Literature. He is all-rounder – a playwright, poet, novelist and activist. But his great strength is in writing novels.”

*You seem to like parodies? Was this motivated by your student days in London and experiences there, I asked the Nobel Laureate pointedly.*

*“I prefer dramatic ironies”*

*The Jero Plays is one your best in that category, certainly.*

*“Well, that’s what most people say, but ...” he chuckled, “but...I think my favourite in that category is The Man Died.”*

*I read it. It's your classic narrative that you started from the middle of the story...difficult a bit but makes delightful reading.*

*"Thank you." He replied taking a forlorn look at the neat carpet of Eko Hotel's Presidential Suite where the interview took place. "But people also say Ake is also a bit difficult."*

I guess that is your style. The style is what makes you

Prof Soyinka laughs: *"After all, you cannot say my childhood years in Ake were not difficult."*

Even as the son of a school headmaster?

*"No, my father was not a headmaster. He was a teacher, but he also was an Anglican priest. The difficult part was that he was a disciplinarian and I was very stubborn."*

In this hypothetical profile feature of Prof. Soyinka, you could see that the interviewer is very knowledgeable on the subject. At a point, you would not know who was doing the interviewing – the writer or Soyinka. The new journalism-styled profile should not be a call-response kind of feature.

- Interpretation. The writer also interprets the feature, unlike in the conventional style which is usually a straight run-down, more or less.
- Vocabulary: The writer of a good new journalism-styled profile must have a rich vocabulary. He or she must be able to describe and narrate expressively. Above all however, he or she must 'communicate'.

The take-off of the Profile must capture the reader's imagination. For you to commit someone to read a page or two full of text, you need to engage your skills masterfully. Short paragraphs (as you find in novels) are better than long paragraphs, if you want

the reader to follow you through. Below is an example of how a writer murders a feature which should have been delightful reading, (published in *Nigerian Tribune* of August 14, 2009):

### **Colour, glamour at 2009 Okota Festival**

The reality of the sustainability of the Okota Festival, a cultural event organised by the Olokun Festival Foundation, dawned on the indigenes of Akoko in Ondo State of Nigeria, when the second phase of the festival took place with more glamour and prestige than the maiden edition. Organising the Okota festival not only confirmed that the festival has come to stay but also facilitated a better medium for the indigenes of the ancient Arigidi Akoko and other Akoko towns to interact.

*(Incredible! This is an intro of 81 words; a heinous crime in journalistic writing! Again, the entire intro is so verbose only someone from Arigidi Akoko would want to read it and even at that may not read the story beyond the intro. 'Sustainability', 'glamour and prestige' are big-for-nothing words not fit for introducing a colourful festival such as the one being reported.)*

The festival, which was named after a “very paramount and important” deity in Arigidi Akoko, started last year as an innovation to the New Yam festival celebrated in the town and in some other Nigerian communities. The festival also provides a kind of cultural evaluation and at the same time, ensures propagation of African cultural heritage by projecting the ancient town to the fore of tourism development in Ondo State.

*(Another lengthy paragraph that says very little, “Very important and important” is an abuse of quotation marks.*

The 2009 festival, tagged; “Propagating the ideas of Okota for human development” was a two-day event which provided a common platform for the old and the young people to interact. There were scintillating and educative events to make the festival more memorable than the maiden edition. The event started with a beauty pageant, which was hosted at the newly-renovated Arigidi Town Hall. The emergence of Hallimat Ashabi Balogun, a fresh graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University, threw the audience into a state of ecstasy.

*(Terribly disjointed thoughts. Let the reader determine if the event was scintillating and educative from the way you capture it. What does 'scintillating' mean, anyway?*

The winner of a new Honda saloon car caught the admiration of the judges at the festival with her self confidence and power of articulation in the general

outing and choreography, cat walk, and more important, the intelligence with which she answered the questions thrown at her during the intellectual test for the contestants.

*(Did the judges admire Hallima or they adjudged her to be the best? Look at meaningless words such as ‘power of articulation’, ‘general outing and choreography, cat walk...’)*

The event provided a veritable avenue for Yoruba socio-cultural heritage to be promoted, as different cultural groups and troupes performed to the delight of the audience.

*The above was extracted from a feature of 18 paragraphs. There is no angle. No description. The narrative was abstract and empty and you should wonder if the writer actually ‘witnessed’ the event. A journalist is first and foremost a witness. If you saw, then write what you SAW, not how it appeared you saw. The sentences and paragraphs are too long. There is not a single quotation in the entire feature. There is no action and life at all in a festival that the headline introduced as ‘glamour-laced’. The writer appeared confused and ends up also confusing the reader. Consider a re-work of the same story:*

Hallima Ashabi Balogun, an unemployed 2009 Chemistry graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University drove the new *Honda Accord* round the dusty premises of Arigidi Akoko town hall and shouts of ‘Halli...Halliee...’ rented the air.

*(The writer starts from a particular aspect of the event that could hook the reader to read on. Notice that in about 30 words, the writer is able to reveal much about the winner and the event place. If the words are longer, the writer must break it into two paragraphs, the second serving as an elaboration of the first.)*

She alighted from the car elegantly as floodlights of photo and video cameras revealed her smooth dark-complexion, perhaps one of the qualities that just earned her the N4million-worth car as the first *Miss Arigidi*.

“This is the Lord’s doing,” she started, but before she could complete the Biblical refrain (“and it is marvelous in our eyes”), a louder ovation went out:

“Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!!!Arigidi a gbe o (Arigidi will uphold you).

Miss Arigidi was one of the several highpoints of the 2009 Okota Festival in Arigidi-Akoko, Ondo State.

*(Cut back to background the feature)*

The two-day event started at 9 am on Monday, August 5, when the traditional ruler, Oba.....”

*(The writer is now air-borne: Narrative begins here in a sequence that the reader can follow and understand. Towards the end of the feature, the writer – just like a pilot – will now begin to prepare for landing... until he or she lands the airplane.)*

There is no way a writer can come up with a good feature, especially using the new journalism style if he or she failed to do the proper homework at the scene of the event. In the above example, the writer should have picked the angle (or several possible angles) of the story right at the scene and begun getting the materials that could flesh up that angle (e.g. whom to have a chat with, which photographs to take, which information or data are needed but not available, etc.) If the writer knew he or she would use the pageant as intro-peg, he needed the right anecdotes and quotes. The best place to get it is at the scene. Therefore, a good ‘new journalism’ feature writer must put all the five human senses to use at all times – whether on the field or when writing the final script. The writer using the conventional form could be content with the sense of hearing and may be sense of seeing. Not, the ‘new journalist’. He sniffs. He smells. He touches. He feels. He must make the reader do exactly the same.

### **3.3 Self-Assessment Questions**

1. Write an introductory paragraph using the new journalism form of a news feature on GROWING RATE OF PROSTITUTION ON CAMPUSES.
2. Write an introductory paragraph using the new journalism form of a profile feature on the HOW COMMERCIAL SEX PERVADES NIGERIAN CAMPUSES.
3. What differentiates a News Feature written in the Conventional form from the one in the New Journalism form?

### **4.0 Conclusion**

The basic difference between the conventional style of News Feature and the New Journalism Feature is in the style. The conventional-styled news feature uses more

of formal writing norms while the new-journalism-styled feature uses the semi-formal approach.

Profile features written in the new journalism genre adapt the writing techniques used in literature and the arts. The writer is permitted to intrude into the story without obstructing it. Instead of witnessing an event, the reporter could be part of the event, as an Expose. It includes more details which would ordinarily not be put in the conventional-styled profile stories and engages all the five human senses.

## 5.0 Summary

The News Feature written in the new journalism style genre usually has a brief intro that is powered with strong verbs and anecdotes; is written in the present or present continuous and where necessary past tense but rarely in the past participle; follows a chronological sequence, and has a clear tone and the ending paragraph should be written to make an impact.

Profile Features written in the new journalism are: Extra effort to know the personality or object of the profile; more descriptive with apt narratives; comes with a distinct angle and plot; requires more vocabulary and variations in expressions, and contains more facts than a conventional profile feature.

## 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment

1. Write a profile feature on any personality, town or event of your choice. The feature should not be more than 200 words and must contain all of the following literary devices: *Parody, Irony, Climax, Imagery, Simile, Metaphor, Consonance, Contrast, Oversimplification, Onomatopoeia*, and *Rhymes*.
2. Write a news feature using the new journalism style on any subject that has dominated the Nigerian media scene in the past two weeks in not more than 200 words.

## **7.0 References/Further Reading**

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**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATION****MODULE 4 - WRITING THE FEATURE STORY (NEW JOURNALISM STYLE)****UNIT 3 - THE EXPOSE****1.0 Introduction**

Now we have gotten to the climax of this Course: the investigative piece that is crafted like a novel. This is where you separate ‘the boys from the men’ in journalistic writing.

Until the late 1950s and early 1960s, much of writers in journalism (reporters and columnists) wrote in the formal and conventional style – the typical approach of writing essays. This style did not permit detailed descriptions or stylistic writing.

The advent of ‘new journalism’ in the 1960s and 1970s has permanently altered the ways journalistic publications are written. The Expose and the Investigate or In-depth Feature story are the greatest beneficiaries of this contemporary styles of writing.

**2.0 Objectives**

This Unit will enable you to:

- Explain the structure and style of writing Expose Features *based on the News Journalism style*.
- Write expose (or investigative or in-depth) features using the new journalism style.

**3.0 Main Content****3.1 Writing an Expose/Investigative Feature (New Journalism)**

Let us learn a little bit about the origin of the form in the words of one of its pioneers, Tom Wolfe:



In the fall of 1962 I happened to pick up a copy of *Esquire* and read a story called ‘Joe Louis: The King as a Middle-aged Man.’ The piece didn’t open like an ordinary magazine article at all. It opened with the tone and mood of a short story, with a rather intimate scene: or intimate by the standards of magazine journalism in 1962, in any case:

“Hi, sweetheart!” Joe Louis called to his wife, spotting her waiting for him at the Los Angeles airport.

“She smiled, walked toward him, and was about to stretch up on her toes to kiss him – but suddenly stopped.

“Joe,” she said, “where is your tie?”

“Aw, sweetie,” he said, shrugging, “I stayed out all night in New York and didn’t have time –“

“All *night!*” she cut in. “When you’re out here all you do is sleep, sleep, sleep.”

“Sweetie,” Joe Louis said, with a tired grin, “I’m an old man.”

“Yes,” she agreed, “but when you go to New York you try to be young again.”

The story featured several scenes like that, showing the private life of a sports hero growing older, balder, sadder. It would come up with a scene in the home of Louis’s second wife, Rose Morgan. In this scene, Rose Morgan is showing a film of the first Joe Louis-Billy Conn fight to a roomful of people, including her present husband...

*What the hell is going on? With a little reworking the whole article could have read like a short story.* The passages in between the scenes, the expository passages, were conventional 1950s-style magazine journalism, but they could have been easily recast. The piece could have been turned into a non-fiction short story with very little effort. The really unique thing about it, however, was the reporting. This I frankly couldn’t comprehend at first. I really didn’t understand how anyone could manage to do reporting on things like the personal by-play between a man and his fourth wife at an airport and then follow it up with that amazing cakewalk down Memory Lane in his second wife’s living room. My instinctive, defensive reaction was that the man had piped it, as the saying went...winged it, made up the dialogue...Christ, maybe he made up whole scenes, the unscrupulous geek...The funny thing was, that was precisely the reaction that countless journalists and literary intellectuals would have over the next nine years as the New Journalism picked up momentum. *The bastards are making it up!* (I’m telling you, Ump, that’s a *spitball* he’s throwing...) Really stylish reporting was something no one knew how to deal with, since no one was used to thinking of reporting as having an aesthetic dimension.

At the time I hardly ever read magazines like *Esquire*. I wouldn’t have read the Joe Louis piece except that it was by Gay Talese. After all, Talese was a reporter for

the *Times*. He was a player in my own feature game. What he had written for *Esquire* was so much better than what he was doing (or was allowed to do) for the *Times*. I had to check out what was going on.

Not long after that, Jimmy Breslin started writing an extraordinary local column for my own paper, the *Herald Tribune*. Breslin came to the *Herald Tribune* in 1963 from out of nowhere, which is to say he had written a hundred or so articles for magazines like *True*, *Life*, and *Sports Illustrated*. Naturally, he was virtually unknown. At that time, knocking your brains out as a free-lance writer for popular magazines was a guaranteed way to stay anonymous. Breslin caught the attention of the *Herald Tribune*'s publisher, Jock Whitney, through his book about the New York Mets called *Can't Anybody Here Play This Game?* The *Herald Tribune* hired Breslin to do a 'bright' local column to help offset some of the heavy lumber on the editorial page, paralyzing snoremongers like Walter Lippaann and Joseph Alsop. Newspaper columns had to become a classic illustration of the theory that organisations tend to promote people up on their levels of incompetence...

In any case, Breslin made a revolutionary discovery. He made the discovery that it was feasible for a columnist to actually leave the building, go outside and do reporting of his own, genuine legwork. Breslin would go up to the city editor and ask what stories and assignments were coming up, choose one, go out, leave the building, cover the story as a reporter, and write about it in his column. If the story were big enough,, his column would start on page one instead of inside. As obvious as this system may sound, it was unheard of among newspaper columnists, whether local or national...

In the spring of 1963, I made my own entry into this new arena, although without meaning to...I have already described the odd circumstances under which I happened to write my first magazine article – “There Goes (Varoom! Varoom!) That Kandy-Kolored (Thphhhhh!) Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby (Rahghhh!) Around the Bend (Brummmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm). . . - in the form of what I thought was merely a memorandum to managing editor of *Esquire*. This article was by no means like a short story, despite the use of scenes and dialogue. I wasn't thinking about that at all. It is hard to say what it was like. It was a garage sale, that piece...vignettes, odds and ends of scholarship, bits of memoir, short bursts of sociology, apostrophes, epithets, moans, cackles, anything that came into my head, much of it thrown together in a rough and awkward way. That was its virtue. It showed me the possibility of there being something 'new' in journalism. What interested me was not simply the discovery that it was possible to write accurate non-fiction with techniques usually associated with novels and short stories. It was that – plus. It was the discovery that it was possible in non-fiction, in journalism, to use any literary device, from the traditional dialogisms of the essay to stream-of-consciousness and to use many different kinds simultaneously or within a relatively short space...to excite the reader both intellectually and emotionally...



The voice of the narrator, in fact, was one of the great problems in non-fiction writing. Most non-fiction writers, without knowing it, wrote in a century-old British tradition in which it was understood that the narrator shall assume calm cultivated and, in fact, genteel voice. The idea was that the narrator's own voice should be like the off-white or putty-colored walls that Syrie Maugham popularized in interior decoration...a 'neutral background' against which bits of color would stand out.

[From Tom Wolfe, *The new journalism*, London: Pan Books, 1980).

From the 'memoirs' of Tom Wolfe, we have a fairly detailed grasp of what the *new journalism* is all about. It is a term that represents a cacophony of styles. We can point out attributes of the style but under it, no one can limit the creative freedom of the writer beyond what the law and ethics of the journalism profession dictate. It is not about copying Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese or Ray Ekpu. It is about expressing yourself, your personality in the way you write using the literary norms and journalism canons. It is about doing it *your own way*.

Nevertheless, especially for the purpose of helping the rookie writer know how this genre works, we can readily point to some key attributes of the genre, using the Expose Feature, the style in which the genre is best epitomized.

### 3.2 Key-points to note in writing an Expose (or In-depth or Investigative Report) using the New Journalism Style:

#### THE INTRO

1. *Craft and position the 'thesis statement' (the feature's controlling idea) properly because it is the heart of the feature.* You can position it as the opening sentence or the last sentence in the first paragraph. It is also possible to put it in the middle of the first paragraph, where the paragraph is of two or three sentences. The essence of this positioning is to give you an impact. The intro below was written by **Ray Ekpu** in the April edition of *Newswatch* in 1985. The title of the article was **The Woman Died**. The thesis statement is underlined and the topic sentence is in bold.

**The illegal drugs business in Nigeria is beginning to live up to its character.** Dark things are happening because it is a business conducted in dark zones of the human anatomy. In South East-Asia, heroin barons own jets and well-equipped armies, the former for ferrying their cargo of death, and the later for fighting their narcotics wars. For instance, Khun Sa, 53, reputed to be the most powerful opium warlord in Asia, has a private army of 5,000 well-armed men, an army bigger than what many African countries can boast of.

2. *Secure the reader's attention from the blast of the whistle.* Sometimes you have to arrest the reader from the headline and your intro sustains the attention. There are different kinds of leads you can use to do this – question lead, provocative lead, anecdote lead, who lead, what lead, why lead, interpretative lead, etc.
3. *Master how to craft topic sentences.* Your topic sentence unifies your paragraph. It serves as the stem for all the other sentences. It can come at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a paragraph. Make sure the topic sentence has a strong verb and carefully pick your words to ensure every word performs an important role in the sentences.
4. *Set the tone from the intro.* The tone of the feature is the mood of the story (or that of the writer, if it is an opinion feature or editorial). It represents the attitude of the writer to the subject: is it calm, joy or sad? Determine the language of the feature – is it formal, informal or standard? Is it going to be a debate, an argument, a contrast or a comparison? The following intro to an article – **Mission to Algeria** in *Complete Sports* in August 2005 by **Mimini Alao** is very clear in terms of the tone of the piece.

Substitute the letters “Al” in Algeria with “Ni” and what you have is Nigeria. Fly the flags of both countries side by side and the dominant colours are white and green. The Algerian national football team is called “The Greens” while the Nigerian team was called “Green Eagles” before the change to “Super Eagles”. But that is where the similarities end, and the rivalry begins.

## **THE BODY**

1. *Your choice of paragraphing style should be determined by your rhetorical option.* For example, if you chose the narrative, your paragraphs would be very short. The opposite is the case when you switch to description, may be at some point in the feature.
2. *The paragraphs are to reinforce the theses, not repeat them.*
3. *Ensure that there is unity.* This means the body of the feature must have a sense of chronology – even though you do not have to list them 1-2-3-4.
4. *Ensure that there is coherence.* The paragraphs and sentences should not occur as independent lots. Link them with transitional words – Thereafter, Meanwhile, Further, etc. Monitor your parallelism. For instance, you cannot write: *he likes swimming, dancing and to play football.* (Right: *he likes swimming, dancing*

- and playing football*). You can also use semi-colons, colons, commas, dashes, parentheses and periods to achieve coherence. In using clauses, never forget to properly refer to your antecedent. (Wrong: *Dr. Olubunmi Ajibade and his lovely wife Yetunde, the only PhD holder to come from Iro Ekiti, likes journalism with a passion.* Who is ‘the only PhD holder to come from Iro Ekiti’ in this sentence?)
5. *Use the active language as much as possible.* Instead of ‘The bowl of rice was collected by him,’ write ‘he collected the bowl of rice.’
  6. *Use the climactic.* Arrange your ideas in order of importance ending with the most important. *E.g. The armed robbers drove recklessly through the streets, shot into the air sporadically and swooped on the Western Bank leaving 35 persons dead during their one-hour siege.* You can use the time of revising and editing your first draft to check the unity, coherence, use of climactic, etc.
  7. *For narratives, refer to time.* *E.g. Ten minutes into the first half of the match, ten minutes later, in the opening minutes of the second half, just after the captain sustained an injury, two minutes to the end of the match.*
  8. *Be careful with proverbs.* Remember that proverbs, when they become overused, turn into clichés. And never use proverbs out of context or in the abstract form. A proverb (at least for a journalist) is to be used when it is the best way through which the writer can create the best meaning or understanding. In a media writing class many years ago, Professor Ralph Akinfeleye of the University of Lagos came across a piece in which the student began a feature with “Words are inadequate to describe yesterday’s convocation at the University of Lagos.” The professor wondered what a journalist would use if not words. Oranges or mangoes? You have to say what you mean. Sometimes a proverb can say it better if you know how to apply it – proverb is one of Africa’s gifts to the world of communication. For example, a writer who wants to describe the difficulty of choosing either of two options could use the English proverb “the devil’s alternative.” But there is a better African proverb for that: *Which one is the better in the matter of the seven-day urine: Is it that you have not urinated in the last seven days or that you have been urinating in the past seven days?*

### **SIGNING OUT**

1. *Take time to work on your ending.* It does not necessarily have to be a ‘conclusion’. It could be a comment, quotation, call to action, poser, showing



the aftermath or a summary sentence. The story could even end abruptly. The important thing is that it must capture the essence of the piece.

2. *Look for anecdotes and powerful words to end the piece; make an impact.*
3. *Don't make the sentence(s) in the last paragraph long.*
4. *The 'signing out' must tie-up the piece – the theses statements and topic sentences are now given a direction or perspective.*
5. *Read the piece and ask yourself if you had the meaning you thought the reader should conjure.*

### **3.3 Two examples: of an Investigative Feature and an Expose**

On the following story is an investigative piece published in the *Guardian* of August 13, 2009. My comments are underscored within the text.

#### **Tale of the missing Michaels**

*Families of two friends seized by the police in Port Harcourt petition the Inspector General and fear for their lives.*

What Mrs. Catherine Akor still finds difficult to accept is that her son, Michael, and his friend, Michael Onyebuchi Igwe, who the police arrested on Monday June 22, 2009, are now dead.

(Brief thesis statement used for the intro stirs the curiosity of the reader)

The fear is that two friends may have joined the long list of victims of extra-judicial killings for which security agents are notorious in the country.

(The writer provides a link to the body of the feature – an important clue to the nature of the feature before he begins the narrative)

A graduate of Management Sciences from the Rivers State University of Science and Technology, 29-year-old Michael Akor and his bosom friend, 23-year-old Michael Onyebuchi Igwe, were last seen in handcuffs on June 23, after the police carried out a raid of their residence.

On June 22, a dealer in Global System for Mobile Telecommunications (GSM) recharge cards at N165 Okporo Road had accused the two friends of stealing cards from his shop.

Another source said they had come to sell cards to the shop owner who then alerted the police at Okporo who in turn arrested and transferred them to the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) Team B, Borokiri, Port Harcourt.

A grieving Mrs. Akor, a textiles dealer told The Guardian that at about 6:30 am on June 22, she was preparing to travel to Aba and instructed Michael to go the bank and remit N245,000 to a lady who supplies her textiles in Onitsha.

She explained that Michael, who sells GSM recharge cards at No 105 Ikwerre Road, Mile One, Diobu, promised to remit the money in the afternoon.

"When I returned from Aba, at about 6:30 pm, I asked for Michael because I wanted to ascertain if the money had been remitted to the lady in Onitsha.

"But my children told me that Michael had not returned since morning.

"I became anxious because my son does not stay out late and we could not reach him and his friend Onyebuchi on their cell phones. I later slept" said Mrs. Akor.

(The writer uses short paragraphs to put 'life' into the feature by letting the central figure in the narrative speak by herself. Notice his good use of adverbs e.g. 'Grieving Mrs. Akor', 'Anguished Mrs. Akor').

About 6:55 am the next day, Tuesday, the Akors heard a loud banging on their gate and Michael requesting for the gate to be opened.

(References to time is important in narratives)

One of Michael's brothers peered out of the windows and noticed a Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) van parked at the gate, while Michael and Onyebuchi were in handcuffs.

The gate was opened and Michael accompanied the policemen to the boys' quarters.

Before someone could get the keys, the police smashed the door to Michael's room and began to search everywhere, while the petrified Akor family and some concerned neighbours watched.

Counsel to the Akors and Igwes, Mr. Johnson Ejekwu, in a petition to the Inspection General of Police, said upon entering the residence, one of the Policemen had demanded to see Michael's father, Mr. Charles Akor.

(The writer uses strong appropriate words...'peered out of the windows', 'police smashed the door', the petrified Akor family', etc.)



When he did, he told the old man: "Do you know your son is a thief?" to which the father responded: "My son is not a thief."

(Action and drama introduced to put more 'life' into the story)

When Michael wanted to narrate to his parents why they were arrested, he was ordered to shut up by one of the security agents who threatened to shoot him dead on the spot.

After searching the room, the police took away Michael's double-top refrigerator, a 21-inch flat screen television, standing fan, compact disk, wrist watch, television stand, home theatre sound system, window and door blinds and the money he ought to have paid into his mother's suppliers' account the previous day.

Mrs. Akor said the policemen did not find anything incriminating after searching Michael's room, and for the items taken away, there were receipts to prove her son actually bought and owned them.

Onyebuchi's younger brother, Precious Igwe, told The Guardian that the same police team also visited their residence, searched his brother's room and took away a 21-inch flat screen television, home theatre, stabiliser, refrigerator, television stand, window and door blinds.

When Mrs. Akor ran to SARS office, she met Onyebuchi's parents.

The police team that searched her son's room eventually returned to the station at about 11:00 am and she approached one of them she identified as Emeka to assist her take food to her son, but he denied ever accompanying the team to her house that morning.

She explained that four days after, her second son, in the company of their counsel went to SARS and checked through the list of detained persons but Michael and Onyebuchi's names were not there.

A policeman on duty advised them to go to the cell area and shout their names which they did.

But there was no response.

(A short paragraph in a short sentence can create a dramatic effect in narratives. Here the writer wants the reader to 'feel' the lack of response by making him/her to take a pulse.)

Mrs. Akor said: "While shouting his brother's name, someone told my son the police brought Michael and his friend to the station on Monday evening and that when Michael pleaded to make calls to his parents, the police refused.

"He was said to have given his father's number to a policeman who tore the paper and threw it away."

She continued, "The boy said since Tuesday morning when the police took them away, they had not been brought back. Since that June 23, I do not know the whereabouts of my son and his friend.

(Readers love quotes and anecdotes. The more they are in an expose, the better)

The compassionate man at SARS directed Michael's brother and the counsel to Okporo Police Station, in case the two friends had been returned there only for the Okporo policemen to say they had handed the friends over to SARS for investigation.

An anguished Mrs. Akor lamented: "Till date, nobody has told us where the boys are. Instead, the officers at SARS have kept on saying they were not the ones that arrested my son, that they were not the ones that packed his personal belongings. I can't even find his properties.'

According to her: "I went to Area Command radio room and gave them money to call the various police formations, but the response was that nobody had been killed. I don't know where they kept my son. We don't know if they are alive or dead. The denial makes us feel they might have been killed."

Precious, a student of the Rivers State College of Education, confirmed that his elder bother actually went out with Michael on June 22 and did not return home till the next day when the police came to search his room.

He said: "On Tuesday morning, the police came to our house with my brother and his friend.

"One Mr. Chibuzor who led the team hit me with the butt of his gun.

He asked my brother's occupation, and I told him he sold recharge cards.

"I also told them that he had worked with a member of the House of Representatives.

"They took away his fridge, home theatre, television and \$2,080 belonging to my elder brother's girl from the Cameroon."

(Short paragraphs – as in novels - in narratives keeps the reader reading along. Long paragraphs puts the reader off sooner).

Determined to unravel what lay behind his brother's arrest, Precious explained that his family went to Okporo Police Station where they were told Michael and

Onyebuchi had some misunderstanding with one Uche, a recharge cards merchant at 165 Okporo Road. He said when they went there, Uche was no where to be found.

The counsel, Ejekwu, in the petition to the Inspector General of Police explained that when his clients went to 165 Okporo Road, a resident in the adjoining building explained that Michael and Onyebuchi, had . come to sell cards to the shop-owner who, on noticing the volume of cards in their possession, alerted the police at Okporo who then arrested and detained them.

When *The Guardian* visited 165 Okporo Road, two ladies there claimed they did not know of any Uche.

When contacted, the Rivers State Police Command spokesman, Rita Inoma-Abbey, a Deputy Superintendent, said she could not confirm if the boys were alive.

(‘When contacted’ does not add any benefit to the preceding paragraph)

On Wednesday morning when *The Guardian* also called the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Bala Hassan, he said he was in Abuja attending a meeting at the instance of the Inspector General of Police but promised to investigate the matter when he returns.

But a confidential police source told *The Guardian* that Michael and Onyebuchi may have been killed.

Ejekwu, in the light of the foregoing, has called for a proper investigation into what happened on Monday 22 June at about 2:00 pm at 165 Okporo Road, Port Harcourt in relation to the whereabouts of Michael and Onyebuchi, and the role played by Team B SARS Borokiri and Okporo Police Post, respectively.

(‘In the light of the foregoing’ is too long and hazy...what foregoing? The sentence will be okay if that phrase is taken out. Similary, ‘in relation to the whereabouts of Michael and Onyebuchi’ can be replaced with ‘concerning Michael and Onyebuchi’)

Precious Igwe lamented that it was morally and constitutionally wrong for the. police to have arrested his brother and his friend that Monday and then, without proper investigation, summarily executed them the next day.

He said, "Our findings reveal that they have killed my brother and Michael. If they claim the contrary, we challenge them to produce them· alive. They have killed my brother, who throughout his life never committed a crime.

“We dare the police to produce them in court or anywhere. What they have done is a crime against humanity. The two friends deserve a fair trial even if they were guilty.’

(The writer having properly arranged the facts of the story in a flowing sequence kept his most powerful quote to end the story. Look again at the emotive strengths of the last two quotations... ‘they have killed my brother...we dare the police...the two friends’ etc.)

In the next example, this time an expose, also published in the *The Guardian*, the writer used a combination of narrative, exemplification and descriptive rhetorical approaches. Although this is a generally good piece, I have made to the text in *italics* – the ‘tools of new journalism’ that the writer could have applied in an out-and-out new journalism style. The crossed words in the text would not be needed. My other comments are stated at the end of the feature:

### **In Enugu taxis create crime, not jobs**

- *New taxi scheme launched in Enugu leads to robberies and kidnapping.*

ABOUT 7.30 pm last weekend, Pastor Ozioma Okoh was attending to customers who had either come to buy recharge cards or make calls at his shop on Edinburgh Road, Ogui New Layout, Enugu, when suddenly a taxi pulled up.

It was one of the new ones procured by the Enugu State Government to ease public transportation in the state.

He had paid little attention to the yellow, air-conditioned car with a little board marked "Taxi" on the roof.

He also did not take particular attention to the occupants. Few minutes later, he was confronted by a gun-toting young man who alighted from the car.

"It was like a bad dream.

“Common, hand over all those moneys to me or I waste your life now!” The young man shouted at Okoh, pointing the gun to his head. At gun point, they ordered me to hand over all the money which I did.

The other one saw a bag which contained recharge cards I bought for sale on the floor and took it along with handsets I displayed for sale", Ozioma told *The Guardian*.

*Gbrhiiiiiiiiiii!!!!*

The gang escaped in their luxury taxi.

Satisfied with their loot, the armed gang ran back to the waiting taxi and zoomed off.

*The man of God lamented:* "My greatest worry is the fact that the bag they took away contains original copies of important documents. One of the handsets they took is sold at N45, 000. I had about N35,000 cash in the bag as well as the recharge cards I purchased a day before".

*The encounter of a school teacher, Mrs. Joy Nwoke* ~~encounter~~ *with the taxi bandits criminals who hide their intentions under the newly procured taxis was more chilling. It appears the disguised criminals have a soft spot for priests.*

At about 8.00 am, last Monday, she had left their home in Gariki, Awkunanaw, for New Haven when, flagging down one of the taxis, discovered that one of the occupants on the front seat was a 'Reverend Sister'. As she settled in, she discovered that the other passenger in the rear was a 'pastor' dressed in clerical collar.

Few minutes into the journey, the 'man of God' called her name, telling her where he met her in one of the churches in the state where she worships. He was said to have mentioned other known members of her church which elicited the woman's interest in the discussion.

Unknown to her, however, the mere acceptance that she was actually a member of the said church and in fact knew all the names that were mentioned became her greatest undoing as she immediately lost her senses.

"From Agbani Road, I was taken to a hide out in Akpoga Nike, several kilometres away.

"How and when I got there is what I do not know. But I recall that I was lying on the floor, reeling in pains and demanded for water. I was offered one (*sic*), but I managed to offer a feeble prayer in which I mentioned Blood of Jesus! And immediately, someone shouted that I should be taken away from the place.

"I was now fully awake but not knowing where I was. I sighted a man and woman whose hands were tied shouting for help.

"I was pushed back into the car and taken to a nearby road", she narrated.

She lay on the side of the road exhausted till much later in the evening when passers-by helped her home.

Nwoke, who was dispossessed of all she had that morning, including her hand *phone* set, said she was disillusioned as she had thought the new taxis, made travelling round town safer.

Government said it wanted to reduce crime by banning motorcycles and introducing the taxis which would also create jobs. *Now the hoodlums have brand new jobs complete with brand new cars to facilitate the jobs.*

~~It would appear however, that hoodlums are now terrorizing people with the new taxis", she said.~~

In Enugu, the new taxis are fast becoming the nightmare of residents following the rise in the rate of crime perpetrated with the vehicles.

Although check points manned by a combined team of Army and Mobile Policemen dot every kilometre of the state, the perpetrators of the new taxi crimes seem to have found a way around them.

This has ~~thus instilled~~ created fear and apprehension on the residents, who now go to great lengths to ensure the true identity of any operator before patronizing them. Investigations by *The Guardian* reveal that even though the taxis are branded with different numbers boldly written on their body (*sic*) for easy identification, they have also become tools to assist kidnappers and other criminals in the state.

~~It emerged that~~ because they are not the target of security men on the stop-and-search exercise at check points and also operate at odd hours of the night, ~~some of them the taxis have become favoured by criminals~~ the criminals preferred the taxis.

*Victim Number Three is Miss Ngozi Nwoha who* ~~Miss Ngozi Nwoha~~, runs a provision shop on College Road, the entrance to which is barred with metal burglary proof.

She said she decided to erect the burglary proof a few months ago, after she was robbed by boys operating with the new taxi that now go by the name 'Taxi Sullivan' after the state governor.

~~"It was touchier because~~ they came in broad day light. I thought they had come to buy things when they began to look round the shop and inquiring about prices of items. I didn't know they were only buying time to allow those inside the shop to leave. One of them was waiting in the car on the steering.

Then one grabbed me under gun point.

*"Cooperate or die!" He yelled as he* ~~The rest~~ ransacked the entire shop.

*"They took anything that appealed to them and made their way back into the vehicle and disappeared left. Efforts to trace them till date has (*sic*) not yielded result", she said.*

When he launched the scheme some months ago, Governor Sullivan Chime said the idea was to reduce road carnage following the high rate of accidents involving commercial motorcycle operators in the state as well as to provide employment to youths.

Chime had specifically said that government ventured into the project to help the down-trodden as well as return Enugu to its former glorious days.

Investigations ~~however~~ by *The Guardian* reveal that the beneficiaries of the taxi scheme do not keep to the terms of the agreement with government. ~~the rules and regulations prescribed for the acquisition of the taxies were jettisoned along the line for anybody who could pay the.~~ *They don't pay the* mandatory weekly repayment of N25,000 and N20,000 for the Nissan Sunny and Alto Suzuki, respectively *out of the total value of each car put at N2million.*

~~Both the Nissan Sunny and Alto Suzuki cost a little above N2 million each.~~

~~In a bid to explain how the scheme had been hijacked by hoodlums,~~ Commissioner for Transport Luke Mammel had told reporters recently that some politicians and highly placed individuals used ~~pseudonyms~~ fake names to acquire the taxies and allocate them to those 'who now, which use them for robbery ~~nefarious purposes.~~

He stated that though government was doing its best to check crime in the state, disgruntled elements that used the motorcycles to commit crimes before now could have resorted to doing so using the taxies, stressing that it was for the security agents to be vigilante

But residents are expressing divergent views as to why criminals have resorted to carrying out their activities under the cover of the new taxies.

Mr Mike Udoka, a trader in Kenyatta Market, said the weekly repayment was on the high side, stressing that it was contributory to the high fares charged by the new taxi operators as well as using them for crimes to meet up with payment.

~~He said~~ *noted that* since the scheme was introduced, he has not boarded any of the taxies citing Abuja, where "clean and beautiful taxies take as low as N200 against N1,500 and N1000 charged here in Enugu ",

He called on the government to bring down the cost of the cars to reduce the burden being borne by individual operators, just as he remarked that, proper surveillance be conducted around those who operate the vehicles in the state.

He also blamed the Ministry of Transport for the lapse, stressing that it would have been better supervised had the project been allowed to be managed by the State Transport Corporation.

~~Speaking on the new development,~~ the Police said the 'Stop-and-Search' strategy for crime prevention was general and applies to all categories of vehicles operating in the state.

Police Public Relations Officer, Ebere Amaraizu explained that, it was in close surveillance to reduce crime to the barest minimum in the state, adding that security was a collective responsibility of all and sundry.



*Pastor Okoh, Sister Nwoke and Miss Nwoha who are yet to recover from their sullen faces in different near-fatal encounters with the Sullivan taxi bandits would hardly find the cops' words reassuring.*

### **3.4 Self-Assessment Questions**

1. Explain Tom Wolfe's idea of new journalism
2. What the limitations of this kind of writing?

## **4 Conclusion**

The Expose or investigative feature involves using the non-fiction style to write fiction stories. It captures the imagination of readers by taking them through the event graphically.

This form of writing requires versatility of the language of communication and good knowledge of literary writing devices

## **5 Summary**

The following major points are essentials to writing

Intro: Creating a thesis statement; securing readers' attention; mastering how to craft sentences.

The body: Selecting rhetorical option; unity; coherence; using active language; referring to time and being careful with ;proverbs.

Signing out: Taking time to work out the ending; using good anecdotes; avoiding long paragraphs; tying up the piece neatly and asking yourself if you have conveyed what you wanted.

Enumerate the key-points to note or follow in writing features in the new journalism form.

## **6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment**

1. Write an expose of not more than 200 words in the new journalism style on 'The Palm Tree.'
2. Explain Tom Wolfe's idea of new journalism  
What the limitations of this kind of writing?



**7.0 References/Further Reading**

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**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATION****MODULE 4 - WRITING THE FEATURE STORY (NEW JOURNALISM STYLE)****UNIT 4 - SPORTS WRITING****1.0 Introduction**

Let us begin this Unit by reliving the fantastic and unforgettable glorious days of sports commentary on radio by imitating the inimitable legend Ernest Okonkwo (of blessed memory). Thereafter, we will ‘listen’ to Larry Izamoje the CEO of *The Sports Radio: Brilla FM*.

**ERNEST OKONKWO:**

*Now the ball is with the Minister of Defence, Christian Chukwu....They call him chairman. He lobs the ball to the far right where Mathematical Segun Odegbami makes a perfect control of the ball and caresses it with his dangerous right foot. He stands momentarily as if he doesn't know what to do. He moves to the right and stops again. Mathematical! He dribbles the Tunisian defender (sic) and crosses the ball into the box. Adokiye Amiesimakaaaa!!*

*And...Takes a shot: It is a gooooooal!!!! No! Oh nooooo!! My God! This Tunisian defender is a cat! The ball was almost in the top corner of the Tunisian net before the goalkeeper leapt like a tropical cat to push the ball out of play for a corner. Corner to the Green Eagles.*

*Ladies and Gentlemen, it is still Green Eagles one goal; Lions of Tunisia yet to score. And it does not appear the god of soccer will make the Tunisians score tonight. Corner kick to the Eagles and we are 25 minutes into the second half. Who will take the kick? I can see Christian Chukwu...no it's Ifeanyi Onyedika and Okey Isima. They stand side-by-side the Chief Justice, Adokiye Amiesimaka...*

**LARRY IZAMUJE:**

*(Music of reggae super-star Bob Marley up...You refuse to be what you want the rest to be...LARRY'S VOICE: “Yes, they have refused and they have simply refused to be what they want the rest to be. Our sports officials are getting all the*

estacodes and making all the money while the athletes, our runners and footballers are living in penury...” *Bob Marley up again... and under... We are what we are and that’s the way...its going to be.* **LARRY’S VOICE:** “But our athletes are saying, No,no,no, it’s not going to be like that any more.” *Bob Marley up...You can’t educate us on equal opportunities...***LARRY’S VOICE:** “The athletes are saying ‘now we know our human rights and we will fight for it. Let us educate the officials a little bit. If we do not run, you cannot get the estacodes. So, give us our money...Give us our money. *Bob Marley up..We’ve been taken for granted for too long. Rebel, rebel.* **LARRY’S VOICE:** “These athletes have been taken for granted for too long but now they ready to rebel. Give us our money or we will rebel!”

Although sports journalism is one of several forms of specialized journalism (such as science and business reporting), sports reporting is in a class of its own. It has its own body of rules and norms some of which are even not allowed in traditional journalism – for instance subjectivity. Ernest Okonkwo and Larry Izamoje did not read journalism books those unique things they did to entertain their listeners. They never heard anyone do it the way they did it – without breaking the canons of journalism: truth, objectivity, fairness, balance etc. That’s what makes sports journalism very unique – the unlimited possibilities the writer can go. These possibilities have not been very well explored by sports writers in the print media in Nigeria. Can you evaluate the fun that would be lost if Okonkwo and Izamoje had reported those events in some regular, regimented journalism houserules?

A sports reporter can be subjective without necessarily being biased. Ernest Okonkwo said “Eagles one, Tunisia yet to score” because he did not want Tunisia to score. Objectivity would have been Eagles one, Tunisia zero. Larry Izamoje said “our athletes are saying” (Fairness and objectivity warranted him to say “the athletes”). You can report a match between the Nigerian national football team and their Ghanaian counterpart in a way that shows you support the Nigerian team to win but can still be objective by reporting how the match actually went. In *non-sports* reporting you cannot take sides. Example of a subjectively objective report of a sporting event:

*The Super Eagles took our national pride to the cleaners yesterday when it fell 7-0 to the Black Stars of Ghana, the widest defeat by the national team since it was formed in 1939.*

*Sports Monitor watched in awe at the Accra Township Stadium as the youthful Ghanaian side turned the star-studded Eagles to passengers on the pitch.*



competition. What will he or she report? The reporter is not only required to know how to play golf, he or she must be a keen golf follower.

Finally (by way of background) it is important to note that various media organisations have different house styles for reporting sports and these affect how sport is reported. For instance, traditionally most sports newspapers use the plural preposition for a single team (*Arsenal FC are the defending champions*) while some others stick to the traditional grammatical rule (*Arsenal FC is the defending champion*). Some organisations permit their reporters to editorialize (pass judgments while reporting), while others do not.

### 3.2 The Ingredients of Good Sports Features

1. It must be entertaining. Sport always has elements of drama and the writer who waters down the report of such drama does great injury to sports journalism.

Wouldn't it be too unfair for a reporter to write an account of how Muhammed Ali beat George Foreman without including his mesmerizing dance steps and his poetic words ... *Rumble in the Jungle...Thriller in Manilla...Rope a dope...Float Like a Butterfly...Sting like a Bee* and so on. The Nigerian sports media are just coming up in providing entertaining reports, thanks to *Complete Sports* and *Brilla FM*. Sports reporting, in its best form, must primarily be fun and entertaining – if that will break traditions, it had better broken them. Look at the following intro and 'neck' to a news feature on Lee Bowyer, a hard-tackling defender (in the British Premier League):

*Bowyer is right. He's no Kean.*

*Lee Bowyer has been complaining. The sensitive flower says he is misunderstood and he is a victim.*

*The nearest thing the English game has to a natural Jeremy Kyle Show guest tells us: "My record isn't that bad. If you are talking about football there have been a lot of worse. I've not done stuff like Patrick Vieira or Roy Keane."*

*(Nigerian Tribune, August 5, 2009).*

2. It must be brief and breezy. Sport writing is usually short, quick and sharp – like all sport is. The writer must be able to describe, narrate, illuminate, exemplify all within little available time and space. Sometimes this is difficult to do. How do you, for instance, compress 90 minutes of an action-packed football encounter into ten paragraphs of report? But a sport writer must be able to do exactly that. Usually, if the reporter understands the game, the task will not be Herculean. For example, in football, the major things to report are the goals, the near goals, narrow

misses exceptional display of skills, penalties and free kicks, fouls and unusual occurrences such as fouls overlooked, brawls etc. The reporter's overview may also be included, depending on house style.

3. Coherence. Although the writer does not always have to make his or her narrative chronological, there still must be order and coherence. You can start from the particular (e.g. how a goal was scored and move backwards to begin the narration or start the narration from the blast of the whistle with the goals reported between). The actions recorded in the entire piece must not be disjointed.

4. Anecdotes. Sport reporting thrives on anecdotes. Use words and expressions that are amusing. Bring life and action up in the article or story. A British journalist headlined the sale of footballer Emmanuel Adebayor by Arsenal FC (known as *The Gunners*) poetically, thus: "*Adebayor is a gonner!*". Another writer, in reporting Daniel Amokachi's poor form while at Everton wrote the following intro (known in literary term as 'unwarranted extrapolation'):

*Everton are making moves to dump their 12 million-pound luxury, Daniel Amaokachi. The Nigerian international has scored three goals in 17 matches – each goal cost the club a staggering 4 million pounds.*

(Amokachi could have assisted in scoring many more goals as a support striker but the anecdote is valid.)

5. Classification. Because sports fans always are in a hurry to catch fun, whenever the report is long, classify the text to make it lively. Break the text with attractive and creative sub-heads. In a feature on Portuguese football star, Ronaldo, the following would be good sub-heads (and would surely keep the reader reading on): "Ladies and girlfriends", "Free-kicks and I", "Messi", "Racism?", "Footballer of the Year Award", "Missing Penalties", "What Louis Figo told me" etc.

6. Don't give a picture, paint the picture. When the sport writer gives the picture of a sport event, you would see expressions like "the match was not interesting", "the visitors fought back to no avail", "the coach left no stone unturned in his preparation of the team". But for a reporter who paints the picture, you would see expressions like "throughout the 90 minutes there were only three shots at goal and the players could hardly keep the ball for 30 seconds without losing it" (instead of 'the match was not interesting'); "the visitors kept the ball around the opponent's goal mouth, hitting the upright twice and losing a penalty but the match remained 0-2 against them). For 'the coach left no stone unturned...' simply say "the coach practised handling of dead balls, square marking and exercise drills with the players".

7. Simplicity. Even while reporting highly technical sporting activities such as golf and cricket, the report must remain simple. Write it in conversational language or as you would say it verbally. Examples of simple, conversational intros:
- *Sir Alex Ferguson is certain last season's Champions League final defeat will drive Manchester United on to more success this term.*  
(**Nigerian Tribune**).
  - *Sir Alex Ferguson insists Manchester United new-boy Michael Owen will score goals this season.*  
(**Nigerian Tribune**).
  - *Super Eagles star John Utaka claimed William Gallas admitted fouling him during last Saturday's Premier League match against Arsenal.*  
(**Complete Sports**).
  - *Chelsea forward Nicolas Anelka believes that his partnership with Didier Drogba can be beautiful.*  
(**Complete Sports**).
  - *Brazil forward Robinho believes Manchester City's 100m pounds spending spree proves his club is ready to become one of Europe's top teams.*  
(**The Punch**)

You should notice that the writers avoided using 'has' which reduces the currency of the story, although in some cases has is most appropriate. NOT "Ferguson has insisted...", "Utaka has claimed...", "Anelka has said his partnership..." etc. BUT (as the TV and radio journalist would put it)... "Ferguson insists...Utaka is claiming or claimed or claims" ...Anelka says..."Anelka believes"). This style is sparingly allowed in other forms of news reports and features.

8. Accuracy: As it is with business reporting, accuracy is very important in sports reporting. Facts must be considered as sacred. You will loads of statistics and know how to use them with a sense of history to write sports very well.
9. Logic and evidence are important in sports opinion writing. Fans are usually sentimental when it comes to sports. Even when they are 'fans', sports reporters/writers cannot afford to be sentimental, especially when writing opinion features, exposes or investigative reports. Such articles must be logical and laced with evidence. Readers of the sporting press are highly knowledgeable about the game and a good sports writer would update himself or herself ahead of them to conjure meanings. Mumini Alao, Managing Director of *Complete Sports*, is a popular sports writer whose greatest strength is in logical reasoning and use of evidence. He also has a good command of 'language', not English Language which



he speaks well anyway, but being always able to pick the appropriate ‘mood’ and ‘tone’ based on the subject-matter. He demonstrates in the opinion feature below that a writer can still entertain readers with unassailable facts, evidence and logic, even when the subject-matter is serious - my comments are in underlined within the text:

### **OKIJA SHRINE IN CHUKWU'S POCKET**

By Mumini Alao

**SUPER Eagles coach Christian Chukwu is in trouble.** Your authoritative column SOCCER TALK can exclusively reveal today that the man who answers the name "Christian" has actually been employing the services of jujumen, marabouts and prayer warriors to perpetuate himself in power as the chief coach of the Super Eagles.

(The topic sentence in bold gives the mood of the piece and in the next sentence he paints a ‘contrast’. This intro is good enough to stimulate reader-attention. Notice that Alao in this intro did not use a thesis statement. Rather, he kept the reader wondering what trouble Chukwu was in. Again, the literary allusion from the Okija Shrine which was the most topical issue nationally at the time serves as good ‘kicker’ for the intro.)

Last week, a strange object traced to "Okija Shrine" was discovered in Chukwu's pocket when he visited Abuja to present his list of Super Eagles players to be invited for Nigeria's next World Cup qualifier against Gabon in Port Harcourt.

(The writer provides a ‘neck’ that begins his satire, using symbolism (i.e. using an object to suggest something else, usually an abstract thing)

Detectives from the Independent Corrupt Soccer Practices Commission (ICSPC) and the Economic and Football Crimes Commission (EFCC) were called in to conduct a thorough investigation into the activities of the national football coach during the last six months. The findings by the two society watchdogs have been simply scandalous and Chukwu will soon be dragged before FIFA to answer charges of player manipulation, official deceit and conspiracy to destabilize the Nigeria Football Association, NFA.

Chukwu's heinous crimes date back to the eve of the 2004 Nations Cup finals in Tunisia when he used his prayer warriors to scuttle the employment of former England captain Bobby Robson as Eagles technical adviser. Robson's appointment had virtually been sealed,



but Chukwu's prayer warriors used seven days and seven nights of fasting plus olive oil and holy water to destabilize the NFA.

(He marshals evidence to show Chukwu's 'heinous crimes' – great achievements. But, as it is in satires, the writer presents them as failures. He builds non-existent institutions using true facts – Independent Corrupt Soccer Practices Commission (ICSPC) and Economic and Football Crimes Commission (EFCC) are allusions to the real ones, Independent Corrupt Practices Commission and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. These allusions are necessary to let the reader know that the piece is a satire.)

He then led the Super Eagles to third place at the Nations Cup finals in Tunisia when he should have crashed out in the first round so that a new foreign technical adviser could take over.

On return from Tunisia, Chukwu manipulated President Olusegun Obasanjo to proclaim him (Chukwu) as the messiah of Nigerian football and to also direct that no foreign coach should be employed. And so began the Chairman's diabolical reign as Super Eagles supremo, helped by the unseen hands of witches and wizards.

Chukwu has since gone on to on guide the Eagles through five first round World Cup qualifiers against Malawi, Angola, Algeria, Zimbabwe and Gabon, losing ONLY one match for an ordinary second place on Nigeria's group table, whereas big teams like Cameroon and Egypt were struggling and sacking their coaches.

It has also been discovered that Chukwu sent his prayer warriors after the Three Wise Men appointed by the NFA to find a technical adviser (TA) for the Super Eagles last year. The warriors prayed for confusion to reign among the wise men who ended up short-listing an unknown Argentinean professor who was promptly rejected by Globacom, the would-be financiers of the TA project. Globacom then tried to initiate its own process of hiring the TA, only for Chukwu's juju men to bombard them with incantations of disorderliness. Globacom have since backed out of the project confused and dazed. They are yet to recover.

(The writer uses a literary allusion of the Wise Men in the Bible, although he is a practising Muslim. Journalistic writing, when it is an expression of personal opinion, is *communication* or *seeking understanding*. If words from the Quoran will create the understanding you want, use them even if you are a Pastor.)

As 2004 was drawing to an end, Chukwu's "marabouts" sent another weapon of mass confusion into the cordial relationship between the NFA and the ministry of sports which led to a spate of sackings and retractions, and FIFA dangling its hammer on Nigerian football. This confusion was deliberately created by Chukwu's marabouts so that nobody would find time to discuss the issue of a technical adviser.

(Now, Alao has borrowed an allusion from his own religion to create a contrast. Contrasts are very useful in writing satires because you are presenting a scenario which is different from what the writer wants the to comprehend.)

Indeed, it is quite instructive that, with the Eagles' next game against Gabon around the corner, the sports ministry and NFA are back in love and Nigerian football is now at total peace, following the removal of the erstwhile Secretary-General Taiwo Ogunjobi and his lieutenants.

Last week, Chukwu's juju men were back in action when they used "remote control" from their base in Chukwu's bedroom to command sports minister Col. Musa Mohammed to announce that Chukwu will be left in charge to complete Nigeria's World Cup qualifying campaign, merely because the NFA could not afford to pay a foreign coach.

Observers were forced to wonder when money became an issue in the employment of coaches, considering the fact that Chukwu and his assistants had not been paid for several months and heavens did not fall.

However, the moment new NFA executive chairman/CEO, Alhaji Ibrahim Galadima, set eyes on Chukwu in Abuja, the embattled FA boss started shaking and making promises that 50 per cent of Chukwu's outstanding salaries would be paid immediately! SOCCER TALK findings reveal that Chukwu had some Okija Shrine objects in his pockets when he met Galadima and that was why the Eagles boss kept his hands in his pockets throughout his conversation with the FA boss. After the discussion, Galadima did not know when he started making promises involuntarily!

SOCCER TALK was also told that it was Chukwu's new found "powers" that gave him the confidence to tell his critics to shut-up, following negative comments which have trailed his list of players invited for the game against Gabon. Before now, Chukwu would have been trembling before his critics, but with "Okija Shrine" in his pocket, the Chairman has told them to go and jump in a lake if they didn't like his team list. The critics have since shut their traps, and

nobody is asking questions again about the invitation of three left-backs - Celestine Babayaro, Ifeanyi Udeze and Taiye Taiwo - all at one go.

(He put 'powers' and 'Okija shrine' in quote ("...") to give the reader a clue that the piece is a satire. This is okay when the writer suspects that he could be misunderstood).

SOCCKER TALK can also reveal further that Chukwu's next plan of action to consolidate himself in office will be carried out when the Eagles face Gabon in Port Harcourt. Despite the poor state of the Liberation Stadium pitch, Chukwu commanded the NFA to take the match there because of its proximity to the Okija Shrine.

Meanwhile, officials of the ICPS and EFCC have also sensationally discovered that Chukwu is not alone in his game of manipulation and conspiracy. A black book was found in Chukwu's bedroom containing the names and telephone numbers of several international coaches whose teams are still doing well in the 2006 World Cup qualifiers. It is suspected that these are the witches and wizards Chukwu has been conducting night vigils with at the Okija Shrine, and they are all due to be arraigned for prosecution by FIFA at the 2006 World Cup finals in Germany unless they stopped their diabolical tactics.

German coach Jurgen Klinsmann has been found to be the head of the wizards. He will be the first to face trial in June next year. The trial will be watched by millions worldwide. It remains to be seen how Christian Chukwu will escape from going to jail!

*If you believe what you've just read, you'll believe anything! I have done this satire of manipulation, **juju men** and prayer warriors for readers to reflect on how close Chairman Christian Chukwu has come to demotion or removal several times, yet continues to retain his job as Super Eagles supremo despite his well-acknowledged inadequacies. Is there anything called DESTINY? Is there anything like FATE?*

(My opinion is that the last paragraph written in italics by the writer himself is unnecessary. It destroyed – or reduced - the beauty of the satire in my view. Alao should not have been afraid of being misunderstood. It should be expected that some readers would misunderstand the message of a satire, no matter how well-written. Even masters at it like Niyi Osundare, Olatunji Dare and Wole Soyinka are often misunderstood – that is part of the fun of satire: create robust debate, show the stupidity or absurdity of the whole affair. Alao should have saved the last paragraph to the next issue of the column...*If you believed what you read in the last edition of SOCCERTALK about Christian Chukwu...*)

10. Appeal. Sports writing must be appealing. Apart from the language or tone of the report, graphics must be use to enhance appeal. There must be *balance* (headlines and picture use must be proportionate); *contrast* (big versus small; bold versus italics; colour blend); *unity* (the paragraphs, headlines, captions must agree); *harmony* (treat related elements together – boxing stories on one side, table tennis stories on the other side, etc.) and *rhythm* (the story must flow smoothly and rhythmically – don't jump the stories from page to page). One easy way to make the sport feature appealing to the reader is to whip up emotions and reason. Example:

*Alex Lapel crowned his goal-less season yesterday with a late penalty miss at San Siro and costing Barcelona the League Trophy.*

*Barca fans wept uncontrollably as the \$17 million signing drove the ball metres over the bar in a penalty that could have earned his side the League Cup.*

*“You can call him the biggest flop that ever played football,” an angry fan said of the Brazilian. “He is an absolute flop, the flop of the year.”*

If the writer did not want to appeal to emotions, the story might have been run thus:

*Barcelona were kicked out of the League Cup yesterday following a late penalty miss by star signing Alex Lapel*

*The Brazilian flicked a penalty which could have given his team a win over the bar, two minutes to the end of the game.*

*“You can call him the biggest flop that ever played football,” a Barca fan said of the Brazilian after the match. “He is an absolute flop.”*

### 3.3 Self-Assessment Questions

1. What makes sports writing different from conventional journalistic writing?
2. What makes sports writing different from ‘the new journalism style’?
3. Explain the 10 attributes of sports writing.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

Sport writing is a distinct sub-genre in literary journalism. Because sport is entertainment, competition and fun, it cannot be written well in formal, regimented style. The liberties provided by the ‘new journalism’ are often not enough to make the right impact. Thus, Sport Writing has its own lexical culture, language and style.

#### 5.0 Summary

The sports feature must many of the following 10 attributes: It must be *entertaining, brief and breezy, coherent, anecdotal, classified if it is a long report, descriptive, simple, accurate and factual, logical and appealing.*

#### 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Compare the writing styles of *Complete Sports, The Guardian, Tribune and The Nation*, using the sports pages as case studies.
2. What makes sports writing different from conventional journalistic writing?
3. Using the 10 attributes of sports writing as benchmarks, compare a British tabloid of your choice with any Nigerian newspaper. Your comparison should be in not more than 200 words. Note: You can access some foreign newspapers through the Internet.

#### 7.0 References/Further Reading

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**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATION****MODULE 5 - ANALYSIS OF STYLES OF SOME LEADING NIGERIAN JOURNALIST-WRITERS****UNIT 1 - THE EXPRESSIONISTS/EXEMPLIFIERS****1.0 Introduction**

You can tell from someone's handwriting the kind of person he or she is. Well, may be that is a little exaggeration. Let's put the other way round: Someone's writing reveals the kind of person he or she is. Even when the article is not an opinion piece, the personality of the writer still creeps in. The more we move from the conventional writing style towards new journalism, the more we reveal who we are as journalists. Since 1859 when Nigeria's first newspaper, *Iwe Irohin* debuted, journalist-writers of various shades have emerged to reflect the various generations as they passed by. From 1859 to the early 1920s were the religious advocates who wrote basically from the persuasive point of view. The 1920s to 1960s were the vibrant era of the nationalist journalist-writers (Nnamdi Azikiwe, Ernest Ikoli, Obafemi Awolowo, SL Akintola, Peter Enahoro (Peter Pan)). The post-independent journalist-writers in the country were development-conscious in their writings (we may call them the nation-builders) - (Lateef Jakande, Bisi Onabanjo (Ayekooto), Bola Ige (Cicero). From 1970s to the present generation, Nigerian journalist-writers became philosophically nuanced. There were those who wrote militantly to chase the military out of power while there were also pragmatists whose pens were willing tools in the hands of the military bourgeoisie. Some writers focused on primordial ethnic sentiments, while other are from the literary world who veered into journalism to express themselves in another way (- Tony Momoh, Ebenezer Williams, Alade Odunewu (Allah De), Dele Giwa, Ray Ekpu, Yakubu Mohammed, Sonala Olumhese and Niyi Osundare, Segun Osoba, A.T. Ahmed, Dan Agbese, Dele Olojede, May-Ellen Ezekiel, Chris Anyanwu, Bayo Onanuga, Soji Omotunde and scores of other journalist-writers. Quite a number of these journalists were columnists and many were also columnists, re-write specialists, editors and reporters. Rather than classify contemporary Nigerian journalist-writers by philosophy, it is perhaps more enlightening to classify them on the basis of their writing style. To a reasonable extent, these styles also reveal a lot about the philosophy of the writer.

## 2.0 Objectives

At the end of this Unit, you would:

- Have learnt some writing skills from outstanding Nigerian journalist-writers who like to illuminate their writings with examples and whose strong attributes are their abilities to express themselves and be able to use similar skills in writing features.

## 3.0 Main Content

### 3.1 Overview on Expressionists/Exemplifiers

The Expressionists/Exemplifiers are the journalist-writers whose style is to develop a thesis statement (often with a topic sentence that captures the reader's interest) and use examples to support the thesis in the body of the essay. The power of their writings is in their skills to form expressions that convey the central themes of their messages. Rather than narrate the issues to be discussed before they now express their views, often their views are not expressly stated. Often also, they do not use the personal pronoun "I" in conveying their thoughts. Through their expressive sentences, however, one is not in doubt regarding their views or the direction of their thoughts. Many Nigerian journalists and media organisations use this approach – *The News Magazine*, Dan Agbese, Ray Ekpu, Dele Giwa, Niyi Osundare, Mike Awoyinfa and Pini Pason are some of them. They do not bombard the readers with facts or evidence. Rather they anchor their article on a strong incontrovertible thesis and back it up the examples, analogies, and comparisons, all woven with powerful expressions that go with the thesis. This, however, does not mean that their essays and writings lack substance. The point is that when exemplifiers lay hands on a very solid fact or truth, it is enough for them to build a cover story or volumes of pages on – with examples. Just one nail is enough once it is strong enough. All you need is a power sledge-hammer to drive it home.

We shall now look at examples of writings of the some of these institutions/journalists.

**Exemplifiers have REPORTORIAL skills.**

#### 3.1.1 *The News Magazine*

Bayo Onanuga, a graduate of the Department of Mass Communication, University of Lagos, was editor of the *African Concord*, a Pan-African news magazine published by the Concord Press in the 1980s. The magazine's style of writing was confrontational and



several times this got its editors in trouble with the then military leaders. The Publisher of the magazine, Chief M.K.O. Abiola, whose business links with the military were huge, had problems keeping the editors in check. It was after one of the many ‘offensive’ stories against the military that the military clamped down on the magazine and its editors. The publisher asked them to tender an apology to the military but the editors refused to do so. They moved en mass to establish their own magazine, which they named *The News Magazine*. The other editors were Dapo Olorunyomi, Babafemi Ojumu and Seye Kehinde. The editors, rather than mellow their radical approach, stepped it up and soon *The News* was clamped down upon by the military government. The editors of the magazine moved in and out of detention. During one of the clampdowns on the magazine, the editors established another magazine known as *Tempo* to keep what was later baptized as “guerrilla journalism”, their unique brand of reportorial style.

What is “guerrilla journalism”? It is the journalism of conscience, of confrontation, advocacy and of editorial positioning. By ‘editorial positioning’, we are talking of having an official stance as an organisation on issues of governance and democratization. This policy over the years has defined the magazine’s editorial style. *The News* uses the literary approach – descriptive narrations laced with copious examples. The magazine’s ‘investigative reports’ are oriented towards ‘breaking news’ and giving ‘news leads’ rather than providing explaining news broken by newspapers, radio and TV. In fact, the magazine’s style is to compete with dailies to break news. Numerous stories such as the Salisu Buhari Scandal and the Constitutional Conference Ruse were broken by the magazine.

This house style perhaps necessitates the magazine’s literary writing style. *The News* has added numerous words to the lexicon of journalism in Nigeria: ‘military dictator’ or ‘maximum ruler’ for ‘military leader’; ‘the junta’ for ‘the military government’; ‘military apologists’ or ‘puppets’ for ‘supporters of military government’, etc. The magazine is very strong and ‘militant’ with the pen. One of the most memorable cover stories of the magazine was titled *Puppets Take Over* when General Ibrahim Babangida handed to an Interim Government instead of M.K.O. Abiola who was popularly elected. In reporting the Salisu Buhari scandal, the magazine put the picture of the former Speaker of the House of Representatives on its exclusive cover with the headline *The Face of a Liar*.

*The News* style is to begin a major report with a thesis statement and exemplification for the rest of the story. The position of the paper is not stated but it is obvious from the ‘expressions’ contained in the reports. Below is an excerpt of the cover story titled



*Andoakaa – A Minister and his Controversies*, is in three parts (the main story ‘Mr. Controversy’ and two subsidiary stories – ‘Aondoakaa’s Letter Urging President Umaru Yar’Adua to Move Against Lagos’, ‘What I told Aondoakaa – Interview with Nigerian Bar Association President’. Below is an excerpt from *Mr. Controversy*, anchored by **Ademola Ogunbamigbe**:

In African societies, there are symbolic links between a man’s name and his actions or fate. The case of the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mike Kaase Aondoakaa, a Tiv from Ushongo Local Government Area of Benue State, is not different. While Kaase in Tiv means “say it”, Aondoakaa denotes “God has said it”. Non-Tiv people simply went poetic with the minister’s name and came up with I-Don’t-Care!

To those who know him intimately, this may explain why Nigeria’s number one law officer dabbles, like a bull in a China shop, from one controversy to another, believing that if God has said or written or advised on something, who can raise questions? Say it, write it, push them...His patron saint, guardian angel or some other spirits might, as some people observed, nudge him on.

Since he was appointed minister by President Umaru Yar’Adua in 2007, crisis and Aondoakaa have become kindred spirits. If he is not at the centre of a face-off between his principal and Governor Raji Fashola of Lagos State over new local government development areas, Aondoakaa’s name would surface in connection with the Halliburton probe, Atlas Cove bombing, Mohammed Uwais’ restructured report on electoral reform, the emasculation of the

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, former Governor James Ibori’s case and others.

The recent disagreement between Yar’Adua and Governor Fashola over new local council development areas beats the imagination of many Nigerians. But unknown to them, Aondoakaa was the master puppeteer behind the curtain on this matter.

To the general public, it was Yar’Adua who first drew the line in the sand with his letter to Fashola, dated 14 July 2009. The letter was entitled: “Re: The Alteration of the Constitutionally Recognised Local Governments in Lagos State by the State Government out of the 20 constitutionally-recognized Local Government Areas Listed in the First Schedule of the 1999 Constitution.

The President drew Fashola's attention to the verdict of the Supreme Court in 2004, in the matter of AG of Lagos vs AG of the Federation (2004) 20 NSCLR, that the process of creating Local Government Councils by any State Legislature remains incomplete until the National Assembly passes the consequential order amending Section 3, Sub-section 6 and Part One of the First Schedule of the Constitution.

He further charged that the Lagos Governor did not take to the judgment of the High Court of Lagos State in the case involving *Chief Taiwo Joseph Tovi-Hungevu and Abraham O. Ogabi and Four others* delivered on 9 June, 2008, which followed a Supreme Court judgement invalidating the continued functioning of the 37 LCDAs.

Notice how Ogungbangbe coined 'I-Don't –Care' from 'Aondoankaa' and his 'short story' device to introduce the cover choice.

### **3.1.2 *The Newswatch Trio: Dele Giwa, Ray Ekpu and Dan Agbese***

Dele Giwa trained in journalism in the United States where he practised journalism for about a decade before returning home to become the features editor of *Daily Times*. Both Dan Agbese and Ray Ekpu graduated in the early 70s from the Department of Mass Communication, University of Lagos. Ekpu edited the *Chronicle* and later *Concord*. Agbese was editor of *The New Nigerian*. In circumstances similar to those faced by Onanuga and Co, Giwa, Ekpu, Agbese and Yakubu Mohammed had left the *Concord* to start one of the most professionally produced news magazines in Nigeria in the early 80s – *Newswatch*. Through their decades of practice, the *Newswatch* Trio leaves no doubt that they are expressionists. Their greatest attributes are their powers of expression. Below are examples:

#### **PATH OF CONSCIENCE**

*By Dele Giwa, Newswatch, May 12, 1996*

The following words from the mouth of Cathleen Crowell III Webb, an American housewife, says it all, that is, tells her story: "Garry Dotson is innocent. He never raped me. Nobody ever raped me. I concocted the whole story of the rape because I had sex with my boyfriend, and I thought I might be pregnant and I didn't want to get into trouble with my foster parents. So, on the night of July 29, 1977, after working at Long John Silver's Seafood Shoppe, I walked past a residential area and into a more secluded place. There I ripped my buttons off my clothing, scratched my body with a piece of broken glass, made a mark around my vaginal area and pinched myself and did other things to make it appear that I had been violently attacked."

Webb was 15 when she pulled that vile trick on poor Dotson. She went on to appear in court and identify Dotson as her assailant, and Dotson got thrown in the slammer for a term of between 25 and 50 years. That was in 1979, two years after Webb's concoction. And then on April 4, last year, Webb went back into the witness stand in a jam-packed court to recant. There she gave the account of how she gashed herself and lied that Dotson did it to her.

Richard Samuels, the judge who heard Webb's recantation, refused to release Dotson because he said he didn't believe Webb's new story. The judge's reasoning at that time was how anybody could believe that Webb did not just wake up one morning and, caught in another imaginative mood; decide to create a new reality.

The Webb-Dotson story is the crudest way of manipulating justice, if indeed Webb did not just wake up her mind to forgive Dotson, that is if Dotson raped her, believing as Webb might have, that eight years in the slammer was enough punishment for a five-minute madness that might have overtaken Dotson during the scene enacted by Webb in 1977.

A more subtle form of justice manipulation took place in the same United States four years before Webb let her imagination run wild. Richard Nixon had the most powerful job on earth. He became the president of the United States, a job which he got on the condition that he would uphold the law. In the process of getting that job, Nixon had violated the law that he later swore to uphold and which law finally caught up with him.

The Watergate scandal was swirling furiously around the then embattled president. The smoking pistol was hidden in reels of tapes that Nixon secretly kept of those who phoned him and came to visit him. Part of one of the tapes contained facts which could incriminate Nixon in the Watergate scandal. Justice John Sirica ordered Nixon to produce the particular tape for his hearing. Nixon refused, arguing that presidential immunity forbade the judge from issuing an order on him.

Nixon then proposed that a highly respected US senator called John Stennis should listen to the tape and certify whether it incriminated him. Archibald Cox, the university don appointed by Nixon as the special prosecutor in the Watergate case, rejected Nixon's proposal. Nixon didn't like that, and ordered Attorney-General Elliot Richardson to fire Cox. Richardson refused to carry out what he considered an unlawful presidential order and resigned in protest. The deputy attorney-general who was to succeed Richardson also refused to fire Cox, and Nixon decided to do the firing by himself, axing both the deputy attorney-general and Cox, and lighting the tinder-box called the "Saturday Night Massacre." The outcry which greeted Nixon's attempt to cheat the law inexorably led to the call for his impeachment and consequently his resignation in shame.

But that's another country, and another time. Here, the music is different. Judges have always complained of ropes being tied around their wrists, a euphemism for "heavy pressure has held me captive and I have lost my conscience." Which raises the ultimate question. Why do men and women allow their conscience to be taken from them? Why does society allow this to happen? The last question becomes legitimate, for without men of principle and grit like those American officials and the outcry of the American public Nixon might have gone away with his attempted justice manipulation.

Fela Anikulapo-Kuti was visited by Gregory Okoro-Idogu, the man who jailed him, in prison, at which time, according to Fela, the judge told him he was innocent of the charges.

And when the matter broke two questions came up: Shouldn't the judge be praised for having enough conscience to go to Fela and perform an act of expiation? And then the other question: Where was the judge's conscience in the first place? These two questions, in the eyes of many an observer, were answered finally by Okoro-Idogu himself who highly-placed sources in government said was later guilty of lack forthrightness during investigation about what happened that fateful day at the Maiduguri General Hospital.

This lack of forthrightness, said the sources, could only feature in the character of a man wanting in principles and sterling conscience. The sources also expressed disgust in Goji for allowing himself to be "coached" on what to say in his statement during investigation, a statement which clearly stood in contrast to the words that he used his hands to write in the letter to Fela. And then this question: Why should Goji allow someone, no matter how highly-placed, to tamper with his conscience?

But then what happens if a man or a woman has no conscience? It is unlikely that Webb had any when she incriminated Dotson so cruelly. It is possible that Nixon never did have anything akin to conscience, and, of course, someone like Tunde Idiagbon. And is it possible not to have conscience one day and then find it the next? For as Fela stood before Okoro-Idogu on judgment day, he never could have thought of this question: Is this a man of conscience?

*COMMENT: The only two facts in the piece were those about Webb and Okoro-Idogu, the judge who jailed Afro music star, Fela. Dele Giwa relied on his expressive ability to bring the Justice Okoro-Idogu to judgment in the piece.*

### **THE WOMAN DIED**

*By Ray Ekpu (Newswatch, May 13, 1985)*

The illegal drugs business in Nigeria is beginning to live up to its character. Dark things are happening because it is a business conducted in dark zones of the human anatomy. In South East-Asia, heroin barons own jets and well-equipped armies, the former for ferrying their cargo of death, and the later for fighting their narcotics wars. For instance, Khun Sa, 53, reputed to be the most powerful opium warlord in Asia, has a private army of 5,000 well-armed men, an army bigger than what many African countries can boast of.

Nigerians are beginning to get a glimpse of the action. When Newswatch first hit the road with the Nigerian segment of the cocaine saga, someone wrote to say that the paper was probably crying wolf where there was none, that the cocaine business in Nigeria was just a drop in the ocean. But little did we know that what we witnessed at that time was merely the tip of a mammoth iceberg. Now we know. At least, the police have shown evidence that a cocaine shop exists somewhere in Surulere and have paraded a dozen suspects allegedly connected with the shop. Perhaps, there are many more of such shops and if the police dig deep enough, they may just stumble on a cocaine mine.

When you see a young man or woman flying all over the world and living in the lavish, jet-set fashion that would make the eyes of an Aristotle Onassis to pop out in envy and yet you cannot put your finger on where the money is coming from, then there is a mystery to be unravelled.

A teaspoonful of cocaine is estimated at N100. That is almost the same as what many low-income workers take home every month after 30 days' toil, at work. And it is clear that all the wretched-looking men and women arrested so far cannot afford the thousands of naira that would be needed for traffic in cocaine or heroin. The major challenge for the police is to track down the faceless mafia men behind the booming business. This hasn't proved an easy task as the suspects have consistently refused to name who their mentors are. In the sub-culture of the underworld secrecy is the password, and when there is need for revenge, the instrument is death.

I can't say whether the above scenario fits the case of Gloria Okon but her story is worth telling all the same. Okon, of 17, Cole Street, Lawanson in Surulere, was arrested at Aminu Kano International Airport, Kano, two weeks ago with N20,000 worth of heroin as she was about to board a Rome-bound aircraft. The lady was reported to have named one "big man" as her sponsor.

The big man who reportedly has India as his regular travel route was on the flight that day with Okon, but it was only later, after the plane had taken off, that the lady named the "big man." The unnamed Customs officer who interrogated her remarked jubilantly "If cleverly handled, she may lead us to the big man behind the drug business." Then a day or so later the lady was said to be on hunger strike. The next thing we learnt was that the lady had died in a Kano hospital.

Etim Inyang, the Inspector-General of Police, has asked the Kano State Police Commissioner to furnish him with the details of the case, which, one expects, will include a doctor's autopsy report, and every information about her, from her arrest to her death.

Doctors may be able to help us determine whether a few days' hunger strike can kill someone who felt fit enough to want to travel abroad, and fit enough to embark on hunger strike, and fit enough to stuff a bundle of drugs in the dark zones of her anatomy.

The problem of illegal trafficking in hard drugs has become such a world-wide phenomenon that governments are finding new ways of combating its spread. Apart from the issue of dogs and x-ray equipment, the government of the Federal Republic of Germany is now employing the services of trained "plain-clothes pigs" to sniff out the powdery substance from wherever it may be buried, whether in luggages or in human crates. And because it is that lucrative, big names are beginning to feature.

Recently, the prime minister of the tiny island country called Bahamas, Lynden Pindling, was faced with a no-confidence vote over an alleged involvement in drug trafficking. It was found that Pindling had deposited \$3.5 million more in his bank accounts than he earned as prime minister and a commission of enquiry is digging out the facts.

In Pindling's cabinet, two ministers have resigned, having been accused of engaging in shady drug deals. The youth minister, Kendal Notage, was said to have acted as a front for a money laundering operation, while his colleague, the agriculture minister, George Smith, accepted money from a Colombian drug smuggler to buy an expensive car for himself. The cabinet is now in tumult and the fear is that by the time the commission of inquiry gets done with its job, it may discover that the country was actually being run by a representative caucus of the drug mafia.

For a while, it looked like the Nigerian case was going to be interesting when we learnt that Okon had broken the underworld's first commandment and named names. We thought that we would begin to get a clue as to how such an expensive business is funded, and how it happens that the only faces that show up at the firing stakes and at Justice Desalu's tribunal are those of the wretched, small fries such as the Bartholomew Owohs and Shola Oguntayos. These people, from all indications, are merely the masked men. The ones we don't see, but whom we ought to see if we have to get anywhere in dealing with the drug phenomenon, are the real faces behind the mask, the real barons of the business.

A high profit business is a high risk business. If you succeed, you win a prize. If you don't succeed, you pay the price. Okon didn't succeed, and so she didn't win a prize. But even without a conviction she paid a price. Someone should tell us whether the lady died of natural causes, or from hunger or from her failure to shut her trap and let the cocaine world just be.

Someone should tell us.

*COMMENT: Ray Ekpu likes to create a big impact with his intro and leave an impact with his last paragraph at the end of the article. He prefers a summary sentence and a topic sentence in his first paragraph and his last paragraph is almost always very short but with tremendous impact; often he ends with posers, as it is in preceding piece. In this *The Woman Died*, the topic sentence is **'The illegal drugs business in Nigeria is beginning to live up to its character'** His parting words are *'Someone should tell us.'* In his famous article *'A Hollow Ritual'*, his first paragraph contained just 13 words: They all made it look as though there was some serious business going. Sometimes, Ekpu's opening sentence is long, as in *A Hangman is a Hangman* (Newswatch September 8, 1986, hee started with: "It is uncertain how the security agencies in Nigeria reached the tenuous conclusion, which appears to have been reached, that the only reason why the terror-machine of the Buhari government caught the flak of the public was its lack of refinement." His last sentence was, as usual apt and short: **'This is like offering poison as a birthday present.'***

*Ekpu ended 'Maiming of the Superego' (Newswatch March 25, 1985) with the following paragraph – a summary sentence: "The NYSC problem is the Nigerian problem put in a capsule. It is the problem of false prophets, by which I mean false leaders, leaders who preach one thing and do another. They have been the bane of Nigeria these many years."*



Dan Agbese writes very much like his friend and colleague, Ray Ekpu. Short sentences versus long sentences; very short sentences; poetic allusions, plenty of anecdotes, good sense of humour, apt expressions, topic sentence, thesis statements and a summary sentence at the end of the piece or story. Consider his intro in *Of Men and Ostriches* (Newswatch June 24, 1985):

**We are not the giant of Africa for nothing. We are tall and big. We have oil. We have land. We have people. We have money. Our oil doom is others' boom. And we are close to God. Very close. Mecca and Jerusalem have abundant recorded proof of how comfortably close to God we are.**

In the following article, Agbese does not just **give** a picture of the subject but **paints** the picture. He starts with a thesis statement in which there is a topic sentence. The remaining paragraphs after the second paragraph (after the 'neck' of the article) are exemplifications of the thesis. Most of Agbese's attributes as a journalist-writer, can be found in his award-winning piece, **'The Trick of Dying'**.

## THE TRICK OF DYING

By Dan Agbese

DYING is an art, a finely-honed and creative art, of departing for heaven or hell. It is also a trick, a beautiful trick, played ultimately on man by that creative trickster, fate or destiny. Dying can, and does, bring honour to a man strange to that six letter word, washing away his failures with the power of a detergent. But dying can also bury a man, unstained of plumage, untainted of reputation, in the dunghill of public disapproval.

The trick is to know when to expire, to give up the ghost, to kick the bucket, or, simply, to die.

The trick of dying makes villainy of heroic deeds, or heroic deeds of villainy. History is a record of men and women who either learnt the great, ultimate trick of dying or forgot it. Julius Caesar knew the subtle trick. He died in the hands of his friends. Such treachery, such cruelty - and the Romans wore natural mourning like a sackcloth. And history remembers him as a hero.

Abraham Lincoln knew the trick. Lincoln was a near failure in everything he did. But he succeeded in the one thing that matters more than anything else - the trick of dying. He died in the hands of an assassin in the high office of president of the United States of America. Had he died as a struggling lawyer, only obscure court records would have kept his forgettable name. He died at the right time and in the right job.

Will Rogers put it this way. "This thing of being a hero," he wrote in his much-quoted work, *The Autobiography of Will Rogers*, "about the main thing to do is know how to die. Prolonged life has ruined more men than it ever made."

True. John Kennedy knew the trick. Had he died when Bay of Pigs invasion crumbled like cookies, his countrymen would have loved to forget him. But because he knew his onions, he ended up a hero of all time. His rule as president of the United States of America was short and glorious. Fate spared him the ordeal of watching his programmes fail, and he with them.

Winston Churchill did not know the trick. Hitler's bomb spared him. Fate prolonged his life. And although his long, ponderous speeches have become classics in political oratory, his people rejected him after the Second World War. And when he finally chose to go, his people sent him along on whimpers and dry cheeks. He was not exactly a hero. He lived too long.

Nikita Khrushchev was a good communist but a bad student of how to die. He was disgraced out of office. Had he died when he and Kennedy confronted each other eyeball-to-eyeball, he would be a hero of the Soviet Union. The trick eluded him and when he did leave of his own accord, his departure was merely noted.

Here in Nigeria, not many leaders have shown they knew the simple trick to immortality. At least, two men knew. The first was Murtala Muhammed. He ruled Nigeria for only six months. He did thunderous things. But it was his death, not his deeds, which made him a hero. Fate spared him a long life. He lived long enough to be welcomed but not enough to be assessed. Had Dimka not chanced along, Murtala would have had to live with the criticism that he destroyed the nation's public service. The great purge of 1975 has become a national reference point. But because its author knew how to die, none, in the sacred oath not to speak ill of the dead, dare blame him for it. So, a hero he was; a hero he is.

Joseph Tarka knew the trick. He died in 1980. The time was right. Because he knew the trick of passing away, he abandoned his political colleagues and teamed up with erstwhile enemies.

His party, the National Party of Nigeria, captured the centre and his state, Benue. Therefore, when he died in a London hospital, the NPN saw it as a national tragedy, and so treated it. In 1983, the NPN launched its presidential campaign at his graveside in Gboko. Yet had he died when Godwin Daboh accused him of corruption in 1974, and he left office in circumstances devoid of respect, few would have shed tears for him. Because he didn't, he became the political hero of the Tiv people. Others now walk in his shadows.

But Mamman Vatsa did not know the subtle trick. He, the Emperor of Abuja, went the way of armed robbers and common criminals and his reputation as a creative poet is interred with his bones. It appears that those who are lucky, time, that old grouch which takes over and plays the trick on their behalf. Some years ago, no one dared mention Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto, late premier of northern region. Even his political protégés distanced themselves from his name and his memory. Twenty years after his death, John Paden published his biography and the old faithful gathered in his honour. Kind words were spoken about what he did and stood for. Even the president had Abubakar Umar, governor of Kaduna State, read an address on his behalf at the launching of the book in Kaduna in January.

Last week, newspapers celebrated the death of Aguiyi-Ironsi and Francis Fajuyi. Ironsi was the first military ruler. Fajuyi was the first military governor of Western Group of provinces. Both died in a coup in July 1966. For long entombed in indifference, both, like the Sardauna, are making their way into the roll of honour. And if they become heroes, it will be that the manner of dying has done it again.

It must be a cruel trick that no living Nigerian is a hero. Obafemi Awolowo and Nnamdi Azikiwe come close. But because fate is playing a cruel trick on them, they are seen more



and more by an impatient generation as political monuments. The simple trick of becoming heroes is not so simple after all. Similarly, Yakubu Gowon is in a dilemma. The man who pulled Nigeria through a 30-month civil war and did titanic things for the country, is not a hero. He is remembered for his failures.

In 1982, Ojukwu nearly rewrote the rule when he returned from self-exile as a hero. But he soon learnt he wasn't and isn't because unlike Okigbo, he has outlived Biafra. It is not given to everyone to learn the truth of becoming a hero.

May be. But knowing when to go has a lot to do with how one is remembered. That is the trick. At least, in Nigeria, where all our heroes are dead right.

*(Newswatch, August 18, 1986).*

### **3.2 Self-Assessment Questions**

1. In Dan Agbese's *The Trick of Dying*, identify any *simile*, *metaphor*, *contrast*, *hyperbole*, *irony*, *example*, *location*, *time* and *result*.
2. Explain the phases in which Nigerian journalist-writers emerged from 1859 to date.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

Rather than classify contemporary Nigerian journalist-writers BY philosophically, it is perhaps more enlightening to classify them on the basis of their writing style. To a reasonable extent, these styles also reveal a lot about the philosophy of the writer. Using this approach, there are three major categories of Nigerian journalist-writers. One of these categories is The Expressionists/Exemplifiers.

### **5.0 Summary**

The Expressionists/Exemplifiers are the journalist-writers whose style is to develop a thesis statement (often with a topic sentence that captures the reader's interest) and use examples to support the thesis in the body of the essay. Believing that the medium is as important as the message, these writers derive that journalist's prowess through the power of their writings skills, expressions that convey the central themes of their messages. Rather than narrate the issues to be discussed before they now express their views, often their views are not expressly stated. Often also, they do not use the personal pronoun "I" in conveying their thoughts. Through their expressive sentences, however, one is not in doubt regarding their views or the direction of their thoughts.

*The News Magazine*, Dele Giwa, Ray Ekpu and Dan Agbese are some of Nigeria's best-known exemplifiers.

The greatest attribute of expressionists/exemplifiers is that they have rich reportorial skills.

## 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

1. Compare Ray Ekpu's *And the Woman Died* with Dan Agbese's *The Trick of Dying* using the following bases:

- i) Intro
- ii) Language
- iii) Examples
- iv) Message delivery.

2. Underline all statements of *facts* and *anecdotes* in Dan Agbese's *The Trick of Dying*

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**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATION****MODULE 5 - ANALYSIS OF STYLES OF SOME LEADING NIGERIAN JOURNALIST-WRITERS****UNIT 2 - THE LITERARY JOURNALISTS****1.0 Introduction**

In this Unit, ‘literary journalists’ are journalists whose writings are influenced by their backgrounds in the literary world. Although the pioneers of this category of Nigerian journalist-writers were literary scholars who veered into journalism as a way of advancing their rhetorics – Kole Omotoso, Wole Soyinka, Sam Akpabot, Niyi Osundare, Niyi Oniororo, Adebayo Williams, Yemi Ogunbiyi, Stanley Macebuh, Chinwezu, Odia Ofeimun, Nosa Osaigbovo, Dare Babarinsa, etc. – most of the nation’s literary writers today did not have literary backgrounds. Other journalists from other backgrounds have come to embrace the literary style of writing.

**2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this Unit, you should have been able to:

- Demonstrate some writing skills from outstanding Nigerian journalist-writers whose writings and reports are profoundly influenced by literature and the arts.

Explain how to write journalistically in the literary form.

**3.0 Main Content****3.1 Overview on Literary Writers**

Literary journalists are journalists who adopt techniques of writing in fiction and non-fiction for journalistic writing. Awoyinfa and Igwe (1997) note:

Reportorial skill must be matched by literary ability. For Lewis Obi (former editor of *African Concord*), the most important attribute of a feature writer is

the literary ability. “I will look for a very literary person; a person who appreciates good literature...should, according to Olatunji Dare, have a very large vocabulary – sometimes you are not saying anything at all, but through the manipulation of language you could give the impression that you are saying something. Even if the reader at the end of the day, says, well, this guy has really said nothing new, he still really enjoys the way you were able to use so many words to say nothing.”

What makes literary writers different from other writers? More than anything else, it is their *language* of literary writers, which is unmistakably *literary*. The use of ‘setting’, ‘plot’ ‘theme’ ‘conflict’, ‘imagery’, ‘irony’, and ‘figure of speech’ in journalistic writing is common with literary writers. They use these techniques not only when writing about the arts, but in other forms of events and issues.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Wole Soyinka, Cyprian Ekwensi, M.C.K. Ajuluchukwu, Femi Osofisan, Dele Jegede and Elechi Amadi used the literary forms in reporting and commenting on various issues within and outside the arts world. They were all literary giants. Some of them also practised journalism and the influences of the arts of their works were very obvious. In contemporary terms, the likes of Levi Obijiofor, Reuben Abati, Dare Babarinsa, Nosa Osaigbovo have distinguished themselves as literary writers.

Babarinsa likes the use of prose style to report real events. He generates his ‘characters’ and plots his reports and opinions. Sometimes, the story is a ‘serial’ (with consecutive versions continued). Abati prefers most often the conversational or dialogical style of the novelist. He presents himself as an observer sometimes but at other times he could portray himself as part of the event. Osaigbovo is exceptional in making literary allusions and illusions. Dele Giwa also engaged the use of the literary style and in fact wrote often the ‘Preface to cover’ to *Newswatch’s* cover stories (really an intro to the cover story written in literary, often abstract form to put the story in perspective.) Literary writers are often very critical in their writings (as they would in examining a poem, a painting or a piece of music). Where they are short of words, despite their usually rich vocabulary, they invent them. We shall take the writings of Adebayo Williams, Niyi Osundare and Nosa Osaigbovo in analyzing the styles of this class of journalist-writers. ***The most obvious attribute of this kind of writers is their imaginativeness.*** Although Williams and Osundare only maintained columns in newspapers and magazines,

Osaigbovo practised journalism with *Sketch* and *Nigerian Tribune* for many decades and currently writes for the *Nigerian Tribune* under the column, MOSAIC.

### **ADEBAYO WILLIAMS**

Adebayo Williams is a University don-turned-journalist-writer. A virulent critic, who likes to put himself in the middle of the story as a participant observant, Williams also uses the entertainment and suspense found in many novels, as it is in this piece published in *Newswatch* of November 24, 1986:

#### **KPALONGO: A METAPHOR** **By Adebayo Williams**

You must remember Kpalongo. But if you don't, hold your breath awhile. History, as they say, is a profound trickster. And it was one of its cruel tricks that brought back memories of our national romance with Kpalongo two decades after and thousands of miles away.

I was in Sheffield this last summer. I found myself in this cosy bar. The night itself was tender. Cool and sly was the breeze of aborted summer. Sheffield, if you care to know, is the sprawling steel city of Yorkshire, England. It is the unofficial capital of what is known among the local folks as the Socialist Republic of Yorkshire. Here Arthur Scargill, the miners' boss, is the folk hero and Margaret Thatcher a much resented villain.

In Sheffield, everything is cheap. Despite steep rises in recent times, the bus fares are still scandalously decent when compared to London. The people are warm and friendly. Inside the ever-creaking lifts in Hyde Park, there is a massive housing estate near the city centre. You are often confronted by happy tramps clutching giant bottles of cider and mouthing unprintable expletives against the government.

By the way, I had stumbled on a gathering in honour of a friend's wife who had just taken a PhD in genetics. What made the achievement quite spectacular was that she had also, along the line given her husband four remarkable kids. All of us, shame-faced domestic tyrants that we were, had been forced to rise in homage and respect to a truly extraordinary woman.

I had sat in a quiet corner watching the proceedings and the logistics of drink distribution. There was plenty of drink. I wanted to try the new cocktail known as Emir's Head. This drink according to Doyin Omololu, the Vanguard's impossible gossip columnist, was patented by ex-governor

and ex-colonel Yohanna Madaki, the wounded lion of Zaturum. But the Emir's Head not being readily available, I settled for an equally potent cocktail known as Head Hunter. The drink scored a direct hit. I mean it went straight for my head. A couple of Head Hunters after, I saw myself waltzing with the Iron Lady herself. In my befuddled state, I motioned for one of the waiters to come around.

"Let me have a couple of Emir's Head immediately," I moaned.

The man, a gentle giant of a fellow, gave me a knowing wink of compassion and told me in a rich Yorkshire drawl: "We don't do that one, guy."

After that, I assumed a pose of superior disdain and began to sulk to myself. The music and the dancing jerked me out of my anti-social malaise. The star dancer was, of course, my friend's wife, the celebrant. All the much younger girls, especially the white ones, were eyeing her with envy and admiration. She was an absolute delight to watch. I marvelled at her agility and elegant shuffling and reshuffling. She was deft in anticipation and her body seemed to have an intuitive accord with rhythm.

Where had she learnt all this from? I wondered. To the best of my knowledge, she was not even a party-goer. Yet, even in my confused state, I thought there was something strangely familiar about her dance. During a break in the dancing, I seized a quick opportunity to compliment her husband on his wife's accomplished swinging.

"Mary is a smart girl, you know," my friend said with a cryptic smile. "But how did she do it?" I asked in profound admiration. "You cannot believe this," my friend began with a cynical hiccup, "this was her first dance in 15 years."

The mystery and my confusion deepened. But before I could add another word, the music began playing again. My friend shook his head. "Now, poor girl, she is going to overreach herself," my friend said with a wry smile. True enough, a crucial dislocation ensued. Her shuffling came at odds with the beat; her steps, a catalogue of sad miscalculations. Sensing aesthetic disaster, my friend's wife graciously excused herself. What was happening, my friend told me, was that his wife had been dancing the Kpalongo.

"That was the 'in' dance two decades ago. She simply took off where she stopped and added some innovations. Don't you remember the Kpalongo?" he asked with surprise.

Kpalongo? The floodgate of memory opened. Like everything else in those days, Kpalongo was imported to Nigeria from Ghana by that country's more accomplished and sophisticated middle class. In those days, Nkrumah, I'm told, used to eye Nigeria with the superior swim of a lean and erect toddler watching a fat and ungainly toddler learning how to walk.

Having been bought off our local masters, Kpalongo hit Nigeria with the force of a new religion. It was Kpalongo all the way. The best was heady; so was the swinging. I remember waking up one night in my secondary school dormitory only to discover a senior who, on account of his unprepossessing visage, we had nicknamed Early Man, learning how to dance Kpalongo. The discovery and the consequent laughter, I must confess, earned me a permanent spot under his bed so that Early Man could learn Kpalongo in peace.

Such indeed, was the extent of our national romance with Kpalongo in the swinging Sixties. And it was one of those tricks of history that its ambivalent memories were brought back to me two decades after and in a strange land. My friend's wife, after several years of enforced social abstinence, years in which she nursed children for her husband and at the same time saw to the realisation of a personal dream, simple picked up the Kpalongo where she left it years back. It was, indeed, a tribute to her resourcefulness that she was able to carry the game that far. But every dance has its time and our heroic celebrant's game-plan finally succumbed to the harsh dynamics of modern funk.

If the Kpalongo drama has any historic or moral lesson, it is that those who elect to dance for their society must be sensitive and discerning enough to know when the drumming demands a new dance, lest they be swept away by the iron broom of history.

### **NIYI OSUNDARE**

A professor of literature, Niyi Osundare is best known as a poet and critic. He believes the writer can and should positively shape his or her environment through his or her writings. Even when he anchored many columns in various national media commenting on national and international issues, Osundare's most preferred medium is the *literary*, especially the use of prose and poems. He is one of the most famous satirists in Nigeria.

Osundare, using the poetic words of legendary boxer, Mohammed Ali, penned the following piece for *Newswatch* in 1986 – take notice that the author was making a reportorial report:

### **THE OTHER MANILLA THRILLER**

Our students in the Philippines sent a letter home in March. That letter was penned with anger, sealed with many years of accumulated venom. Angry, hungry and feeling immorally neglected by the only country they could call their own; they besieged the Nigerian Embassy in Manilla and staged a total and protracted sit-in. The message reached us here in Nigeria, hot and fast. And in a typical Nigerian manner, the bosses of the external affairs ministry despatched a law-and-order ultimatum to the aggrieved students. In a typical Nigerian manner, they ignored the foe and stabbed his shadow.

But the recent occupation in Manilla, like those in Turkey and Britain which preceded it, brings into nagging relief the dehumanising plight of Nigerian students abroad. And it is a plight which many Nigerians at home are not aware of and, therefore, can hardly appreciate. For, in the fertile (and envious) minds of many of us at home, the image of the Nigerian overseas is that of a happy-go-lucky safari star with a princely wardrobe, a fast car, a fast romance, living it up and living it big.

To be sure, some of our students perpetuate this myth by the kind of lying pictures they send home: the borrowed cars, rented robes, even borrowed apartments in which those pictures are taken, their borrowed accent (especially American), etc. - all in a clamorous bid to tell the unlucky stay-at-homes that they have "arrived" on the other bank of the Atlantic.

But this is false, a misleading, false picture. For the majority of Nigerians abroad, life is hard and brutal; living is one unrelieved odyssey of survival tricks and stratagems. Those on government scholarships never receive their grants, either because some files suddenly fly out of those uncanny drawers at the ministry of education, or some powerful officials just decide to crush those "frivolous boys in America" under the weight of an uncanny bureaucracy.

Private wards fare worse. Their remittance files sleep, wake, die and are buried in the adamantine vaults of the Central Bank. Added to this are the cases of private students whose sponsors have been sacked, retrenched or pushed under one of the several edges of our "economic emergency" axe.



Without mincing words, the Nigerian students overseas today are our hostages abroad. We have sent them, through false promises, to a land of suffering. We have given them a bad cheque and their credibility, together with that of their Country, has plummeted like a crashing comet.

And we hardly help matters when we parcel moralistic capsules across to them, as happened when external affairs minister, Bolaji Akinyemi, asked the starving students to "sacrifice," an exhortation which, even here at home, is rightly deemed disingenuous and wickedly selective. By the way, who thinks our students whether here or abroad, are blind and deaf and dumb? Who thinks they have not heard or read about those millions which disappeared into ruling pockets during the Second Republic (and the other administrations which preceded that odious regime)?

Just how can we seriously preach "sacrifice" to our starving students in a country where just one individual can shell out N1 million at a single fund-raising campaign? How can our students surrender their necks when they know that those who plundered the country between 1979 and 1983 are now being expeditiously set loose by our various tribunals so that they can go home in time for another gruesome preparation for 1990?

Even if our students abroad did not know all this, their hosts do, and most discerningly. And that is why rescue grants and charity doles which Nigerian students in distress used to receive along with other Third World students, have simply ceased coming the way of the Nigerians. To many foreign countries, Nigeria is now an oil-rich country whose students require no foreign financial assistance to help them survive. Many institutions to which Nigerian students are scandalously indebted can just not see why Nigeria cannot support its students - the country which hosted FESTAC, that country whose ruler once threw up his hands in helpless confession that he did not know what to do with money.

All this apart, in an era of Reaganomics, of Thatchernomics, of the resurgence of the most virulent strain of Jingoism in the West, Nigerian students abroad can hardly receive support except from their own country. When that support refuses to come, and there are mounting bills to pay, winters to combat, racism to suffer, fees to pay, books to buy and hunger to quell, our students are forced to do all kinds of risky jobs to survive, or to get sucked up into the running, furnace of drug and crime.

When this happens and the foreign press blows its whistles on yet another Nigerian criminal, our rulers here fret like a fuzzy storm, then

go on to churn out ponderous homilies on patriotism and the "Nigerian image" abroad.

Needless to say, Nigerian students abroad need an urgent and thorough attention. The scholarships division of our ministries of education need a clinical overhauling. Those who have made it their patriotic duty to pay "ghost students" while the living ones starve and pine abroad are crying to be dealt with. The Nigerian government should know that a scholarship award is a pledge, and that the degree of patriotism with which that pledge is fulfilled has a way of determining the kind of patriotism nurtured and elicited in the beneficiary. Those bottlenecks at the Central Bank which have always frustrated the efforts of private sponsors should be cleared.

Nigeria's embassy staff abroad surely needs to be more humane, more efficient. What one observes at the moment is our envoys' transfer, wholesale, of the deadening inhumanity and baffling incompetence at home to their assignments abroad.

And, finally, the most efficacious solution is to make education work in Nigeria by making it free, qualitative, relevant and fulfilling. That way we shall be able to stem the perpetual exodus of Nigerian students, and the enormous social, psychological and cultural displacement caused very frequently by that incessant quest for the Golden Fleece in foreign lands.

We need to read that letter from Manilla and heed its myriad warnings.

### **NOSA OSAIGBOVO**

Osaigbovo is a literary artist. And within that genre, he is a painter with preference for archival works. Sometimes he writes so simply so that his words mean what they ordinary should mean. Most other times, one needs a literary mind to understand his discourse. But because he understands that he is primarily a communicator, Osaigbovo's writings are essentially journalistic. Unlike expressionists who spent their greatest energies on their intro, thesis statements and conclusions, literary writers are never in a hurry to convey the message (in fact, they like to suspend the reader's interest rather than wake it up). His conclusion is almost always implied (he lets the reader conclude by himself or herself). He also likes inductive form of reason in his articles. Literary writers take it for granted that the reader will read through and use the entire article as a coherent whole to present the message; hence sometimes they do not follow a predictable form of chronology. They rely on their literary skill rather than the facts of the issue although of course

they have to sprinkle the article with some facts as in this following article: (*Nigerian Tribune* of July 17, 2009).

### THE GREEK AMBASSADOR CALLED ME A THIEF

By Nosa Osaigbovo

The Greek Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Haris Dafaranos, and his wife called me a thief last Friday at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja. Well, I was not really there and cannot say that Mr. Dafaranos looked as fierce as a rhino rubbed up the wrong way. Mrs. Haralambo – certainly not as nice as the priestess **Salammbó** in Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbó* – the Dafaranos may have spoken with the shriek of a soused siren.

Mr. Dafaranos and his were not drunk. They were as sober as Lord Elgin, British Ambassador to Turkey from 1799 to 1803 when he appropriated the Parthenon's ancient sculptures. Greece was then under the heel of Turkey, the seat of the Ottoman Empire. The sculptures remain in the British Museum as the Elgin Marbles.

Ambassador Dafaranos, according to a report in *Sunday Vanguard*, told a group of Nigerians at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel lobby, 'Nigerians are thieves'. His wife had taken firm possession of an expensive wristwatch apparently mislaid by an absent-minded Nigerian and Mr. Dafaranos agreed with her that none of the Nigerians present, including the security manager of the hotel, could be trusted to deliver it to its owner. He said the country had a culture of cookery. When the owner of the wrist-watch appeared, Mrs. Dafaranos said that being a Nigerian, he must be an impostor.

There is apparently no dishonest Greek. So Professor Chronis Polychromous, a Greek, must have lied when he wrote only last year: 'Graft and corruption have always been an integral part of Greece's political culture.'

In the 1980s, the Pakistani High Commissioner to Nigeria said it was a scandal that Nigeria could not feed itself. He said Pakistan was a place of

plenty and that nobody went hungry in his country. An editorial in the *Daily Sketch* demanded authorities to ask for his recall. A more polished high commissioner was sent to Nigeria as his replacement not long after.

### 3.2 Self-Assessment Questions

1. What similarities and differences can you find in the writing styles of Nosa Osaigbovo and Adebayo Williams in their articles *'The Greek Ambassador Called Me A Thief'* and *'Kpalongo: A Metaphor'*?
2. What are the similarities and difference between Exemplifiers and Literary Journalists?

### 4.0 Conclusion

Literary journalists depend on their imaginativeness, more than anything else, to come up with feature articles. Features written them borrow from the literary world – they write like novelists, plot their writings like poets and playwrights but are essentially critics.

### 5.0 Summary

Literary writers are different from other writers essentially because of their *language* which is *literary*. They use of 'setting', 'plot' 'theme' 'conflict', 'imagery', 'irony', and 'figure of speech' in writing opinions, features and in-depth reports.

Pioneers of literary journalism are: Wole Soyinka, Cyprian Ekwensi, M.C.K. Ajuluchukwu, Femi Osofisan, Dele Jegede and Elechi Amadi etc. In contemporary terms, Levi Obijiofor, Reuben Abati, Dare Babarinsa, Nosa Osaigbovo have distinguished themselves as literary writers in Nigeria. The literary style includes the use of prose style to report real events; development of 'characters' and 'plots' for investigative and in-depth reports. Sometimes, the story is a 'serial', conversational or dialogical like the novelist. The writer presents himself as an observer sometimes but at other times he could portray himself as part of the event. Literary writers are often very critical in their writings (as they would in examining a poem, a painting or a piece of music). Where they are short of words, despite their usually rich vocabulary, they invent them.

## 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment

1. Write an essay, using the literary form on the *Palm Tree*. Your article should not be more than 200 words.
2. Compare and contrast the reportorial styles of *The News Magazine*, *Tell Magazine* and *City People Magazine*.
3. What literary terms best describe the following expressions in Osaigbovo's piece:
  - i) *The Greek ambassador called me a thief last Friday.*
  - ii) *The Dafaranos may have spoken with the shriek of a soused siren.*
  - iii) *They were as sober as Lord Elgin*
  - iv) *The country had a culture of cookery*
  - v) *Mrs. Dafaranos saw that being a Nigerian he must be an impostor*
  - vi) *There is apparently no dishonest Greek*

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**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATION****MODULE 5 - ANALYSIS OF STYLES OF SOME LEADING NIGERIAN JOURNALIST-WRITERS****UNIT 3 - THE NARRATORS/ENTERTAINERS****1.0 Introduction**

Entertainment journalists are not journalists who work for entertainment-oriented publications. They are journalists who entertain readers (listeners and viewers) through their writings. You may be called an ‘entertainment reporter’ (simply because you cover the entertainment beat for your media organisation) but that does not make you one. Every form of writing requires a little bit of humour (at least) to make a tremendous impact. Great writers like Shakespeare, Mark Twain, Ray Ekpu, Olatunji Dare have great sense of humour. Narrators are slightly different from Entertainers in that the latter’s primary focus is to create some excitement. To do this, he or she often needs to include some narratives. But the use of narratives is not peculiar to Entertainers. Many writers use one form of narrative or the other to establish or create a background for the feature or opinion. The kinds of narrative we are talking about here are writers who usually present their reports purely in the narrative form. They would start from an aspect of the event – usually the beginning - and pass through its metamorphoses. At the end of the narrative, the writer now interprets the events he or she had unfolded. The commonest form of editorial opinion style in Nigeria is the narrative. The editorial presents a narrative overview of the issue and then takes a position. This can be very monotonous for the reader. Through creative new journalism, editorials are now being written in different forms. Below is an example:

**2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to::

- Identify some writing skills from outstanding Nigerian journalist-writers whose writings and reports are often entertainment-oriented though with strong subliminal messages.
- Demonstrate how to make the reader find your piece entertaining.

### 3.0 Main Content: Samplers

#### David Mark and the corrupt clerics

The Senate President, Mr. David Mark, says he is a saintly man whose armour of fervent faith continues to ward off the cannon-balls of corruption aimed at him by the country's clerics. Mr. Mark spoke last Friday at the 19<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Kaduna. Mr. Mark said the clerics, especially those of the Christian faith, were blackmailers who chased cash contaminated with corruption.

Mr. Mark told the clergymen a story he said was true. A clergyman, his boyhood friend, has been more financially dependent on him than Karl Marx was on Friedrich Engels, whose father owned a textile factory. Marx did not sneer at money, but Mr. Mark's friend seeks it with devilish determination. He is a grasping clergyman, a shameless sponger.

For a long time, Mr. Mark did not mind his friend's infuriating importunity, he had the money, though he was only a soldier. Or was he perhaps a soldier of fortune? You have to have a lot of money to 'vigorously support the activities of a certain reverend gentleman,' as Mr. Mark put it.

The senate president and the cleric are no longer very close friends. Mr. Mark said that the clergyman's regular demands for funds fractured their friendship. Only recently, the cleric asked for cash and Mr. Mark gave what he called his 'widow's mite.' The cleric was mightily annoyed. He expected more money from Mr. Mark.

The clergymen knitted their brows in disapproval. Did they disapprove of the behaviour of their fellow man of the cloth or were they unhappy because Mr. Mark had called the cleric a cash-besotted fraud? Mr. Mark had said in a voice dripping virulent contempt: 'I wonder whether he is behaving as he preaches or believes'.

Mr. Mark spoke with a casualness that sounded a bit like modesty about his stainlessness. He said the demands of clerics put him in an anguished quandary: "The action of some esteemed clergymen has left me in deep quandary for if I am to answer to the numerous request from religious bodies that besiege my office on a daily basis, this may lead to a disconnect in my behaviour and the belief I profess'.

Mr. Mark has courageously chosen belief over tainted benevolence. He has a true Christian conscience. It is, therefore, the most layered mystery that Mr. Mark's good name is associated with corruption.



Confidence tricksters have been using Mr. Mark's name and office to try to deceive foreigners into sending them money. A scam email from 'David Mark, Senate President reads: 'I wish to inform you that we have verified your inheritance file...'

The Senate president's critics say that he did not inherit a rich estate, that his is a story of sudden, suspicious wealth. Unlike Mark Antony who fled Rome in 58 BC to escape his clamorous creditors, Mr. Mark has apparently not owned even a bank since the 1980s. Indeed, the wild claim is that more than a bank would have collapsed if he had moved some of his money in the 1990s. Only Mr. Mark probably knows the extent of his wealth. Some people are so rich that they lose track of some of their hoards and holdings. Mr. Mark, who occupies the third most powerful political office in the country, refused to follow the admirable example of President Umaru Yar'Adua who released for publication a list of his assets as he declared them to the Code of Conduct Bureau.

Mr. Mark has never denied that he is in comfortable circumstances. His cleric friend must have received his 'widow's smite' with a mocking smile because he knows Mr. Mark is in the money. It is now public knowledge that Mr. Mark lodged six million pounds in some British banks for the education of his children. Mr. Mark was still in military service at the time he reportedly deposited the sum, as large as loot, in the banks.

Mr. Mark, according to claims he has not controverted, bought a house for two million pounds in an upmarket area of London at the time he opened the fixed deposit accounts. There appears to be no truth in the claim that Mr. Mark paid 40 million pounds for two golf courses in Ireland. There is some vagueness about the location of the golf courses. Are they in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland?

Why did Mr. Mark, who is said to be childishly enthusiastic about golf, not buy a golf course in Scotland, the reputed birthplace of golf? Was Mr. Mark refused the purchase of the Gleneagles course?

Mr. Mark has readily admitted to partly owning the Joy FM station in Ghana, but some people swear that he is the sole owner of the station.

It is nobody's business that Mr. Mark has married six times. No couple, as far as I know, has ever objected to *TIME* magazine's 'Married; he for the second time and she for the fifth time.' One of Mr. Mark's spokesmen has dismissed Victoria Preye's allegations of cruel treatment at the hands of Mr. Mark as the evil effusion of a bad wife abandoned. Victoria was wife



number five, according to reports. Mark Antony also abandoned a wife. He left Octavia for Cleopatra.

Some people have questioned Mr. Mark's patriotism for travelling on Belizean passport while he was in exile. He had first fled to Ghana during the Abacha regime before going to live in England. England has been home to many exiles, from Rousseau to Zonla but Mr. Mark, in spite of his investments in that country, was not treated as an honoured guest.

Mr. Mark's official website declares: 'He was the man most feared by the Abacha government which tried on a few occasions, though unsuccessfully, to eliminate him.'

But the man Abacha feared most skipped out of the country and did not return to it until Abacha's sudden death. Nigerians are indeed fortunate to have such a recklessly brave and scrupulously honest man as their Senate President.

*(Nigerian Tribune Editorial, Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2009)*

Humour is intuitive – some people are naturally able to amuse others while others are not. However, the funniest joke in the world may not make any one laugh if it is not properly presented. What makes a joke apt is its delivery. Hardly can one find a good writer who does not infuse an element of humour in his or her writings. But it takes more than humour to make a feature very entertaining. Some journalists prefer to create variety and contrast in their publications by looking at the soft side of life; so occasionally they take on an amusing subject and write about it to make the reader laugh and also learn.

The challenge of creating entertainment in the print media is more challenging for the journalist. Unlike radio and TV, newspapers and magazines are limited to only the sense of seeing. You can enjoy a comedian's gestures and giggle at the sound he or she produces because you can hear them; in print, you have to read them up. Yet, the writer must be able to do exactly what the person on radio and TV will do. It thus means the writer must be able to make the reader hear and feel. This comes through creativity and reportorial skills.

### 3.1 Overview on Nigerian Entertainment-Narrative Styled Journalists

There are very few Nigerian journalists who write purely to entertain readers. Among the contemporary writers, a few – like Adidi Uyo, Olusegun Adeniyi, Azubike Ishiekwene, Tony Ubani, Ikeddy Isuzugo, and Onoshie Nwabuiko - are well-known for their sense of humour. The editorial opinions of *Vanguard* and *Nigerian Tribune* are also witty most of the times. The weekend newspapers and magazines are increasingly incorporating entertaining elements in their features. The narrative form is used by most other writers – it is the commonest form of writing features, opinions and editorials in the Nigerian newspapers and magazines. Below are illustrative examples:

#### 3.1.1 HUMOUROUR ENTERTAINMENT:

##### OLUSEGUN ADENIYI

Olusegun Adeniyi was a political correspondent and later editor of *THIS DAY newspaper*. Although he is an argumentative essayist, he also likes to make his writings exciting to read through the use of humour and other elements of entertainment (fables, quotes, short stories, exclamations, interjections, etc.).

##### ***THE MAKING OF SANI ABACHA***

***By Olusegun Adeniyi***

*There is this joke of an American, a Briton and a Nigerian arguing about which country had more innovative experts in their physiological sciences. The American, quite naturally, said it was his country. He stated that he had seen in the United States, a man whose limb was amputated and was given an artificial limb by an American scientist, yet still went on to win an athletic competition at the Olympics.*

*The Briton said that was no big deal. He recounted how in Britain a man whose two arms had also been amputated was given artificial replacements by a British expert. The man, he added, went on to win the world boxing championship in the heavy category.*

*After the two men had boasted about the scientific accomplishments in their respective countries, the Nigerian said he had seen a headless body in his country that was given a coconut as replacement by a Nigerian expert. According to him, not only did the person live, he actually became the Head of State!*

*The joke has been used several times to describe the Sani Abacha era in Nigeria and it is not without justification. But while the late military dictator was notorious for the excesses associated with his regime, one must also concede that politics and governance in Nigeria are sometimes never been (sic) given to moderation.*

*(From: Olusegun Adeniyi: **The Last 100 Days of Abacha**).*

### **THE OMNIPOTENT SARDAUNA**

**By Olusegun Adeniyi**

*In another society and perhaps in another time, he could easily have been named Man of the Year. Not so much because of his contribution to the upliftment of the society. But rather for demonstrating, especially in this season when all power sources are being demystified, that he not only belongs but can get away almost with anything.*

*He has survived three cabinet reshuffles and he is reported to have unhindered access to the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief whom he represents at many important state functions. Today, no national committee or board is considered complete without the chubby General fondly called 'Jerry Boy' by friends and admirers. And for much of the last four years, he has been the unelected 'Senior Prefect' of the Federal Executive Council. (From '**The Verdict**')*

### **MY CAR**

**By Mumini Alao**

*Forget the Super Eagles and the fresh crises brewing between the NFA and the ministry of sports. This may sound selfish, but my most engaging experience last week was the theft and recovery of my car and that is what I'm writing today in SOCCERTALK.*

*It all began like a movie, really. One moment my car was there, parked in front of our offices at Complete Communications Limited. The next moment, the car was gone,*

*virtually disappeared into thin air. When I came out of the office, I met the spot where I'd parked the car as empty as the Sahara Desert. It didn't take long for the message to sink in that my car had been stolen!*

***“O dabi enipe awon guys yi ti gbe moto mi sa.”** I said under my breath in my native Yoruba language. Translated, it means “it appears these guys have taken my car.”*

*Note the words, ‘it appears’. That’s why I said at the beginning of this column that the whole episode began like a movie. Also, note the words ‘these guys’. That refers to the fellows who broke into the car and whisked it away penultimate Sunday, April 13.*

*Looking back now, I remember that I was surprisingly calm at my shocking discovery. I simply walked back into the office and told my colleague Samm Audu, editor **Complete Sports**: “Sam, e don happen O.”*

*“What happened?”*

*“They’ve stolen my car.”*

*“What?!” Samm jumped out of his seat as if bitten by a billion bed-bugs. “Stolen your car?!”*

*The movie was on.*

*Samm and I got into his car and off we went to the Okota police station which was close by. I made a formal report, wrote a statement and the search was on ...*

*...I was in my office arguing about football (yet again, believe me!) with Obi Achilefu of **Intervision** and another friend had come to sympathize with me when we digressed into talking about the Super Eagles formation against Guinea. The policeman who brought the news was surprised when he was told that was the man whose car had been stolen.*

***“Oga, your mind tough o!”** he said as we drove to the Okota Police Station. **“Wetin man go do?”** I said, thankful nonetheless.*

*Meanwhile the news had gone round, and the entire CCL staff was jubilant. I didn't get to sight the car, though, until Tuesday, April 15. And when I finally did, all I could say as a Muslim was 'Allhamdulillah' (Glory be to God Almighty).*

*Luckily the car had not been too badly tampered with. A few items here and there were removed while some important documents were taken away. But the thieves were kind enough to leave behind some three pieces of banana which I'd kept in the car as snack!*

*(From SOCCERTALK, Complete Sports, April 21, 1996).*

### **THE MAIMING OF THE SUPEREGO**

*By Ray Ekpu*

*...NYSC wanted to achieve was in there and then. So when the NYSC and self clashed, when the instincts of avarice and patriotism collided, Obasa, Kila and Company gave their proxy to self. This would indicate that, in spite of what manner of clothes they may wear, there is no shortage of thieves among those in positions of honour.*

*Obasa was said to be a good soldier, which I understand to mean not just a good fighter but also a disciplined man. If this be so, his tenure as a good soldier was short-lived. He was said to be a good Christian who observed punctuality at church services, who probably gave alms to the poor and probably loved his neighbours like himself*

*But his respect for the injunction: Thou shall not steal, was slim. He certainly had more respect for the 11th injunction, a coinage of cynics: Thou shall not be found out. He was found out. God is not a cheat. He does not suffer cheats gladly. Obasa was a betrayer of the faith, temporal and secular.*

*(From: Newswatch, March 1985).*

#### **3.1.2 NARRATIVE ENTERTAINMENT**

##### ***To the barracks, all ye policemen!***

*If it works, some 100,000 policemen nationwide would return to strictly police-assigned duties today, ending decades of policemen running menial errands in "private" homes. But as our correspondents report, it is not as easy as Ogonna Onovo, the No. 1 Cop, hopes to get.*

*CORPORAL Titus every morning raises his hand to his head in the art of salutation of senior police officers on seeing his "master's" children peddling (sic) their bicycle out of*

*the gate. When it is the "master" or "madam" that is being driven out in the car, he instinctively does the same.*

*Titus for over 12 years has been a sentry (called gateman) at the home of the multi-millionaire in Ikoyi, Lagos. That is the police duty he does from dawn to dusk - protecting one master that treats him as a part of his household staff. He does not undertake parade, police refresher courses, interact with colleagues in the station, practically, Titus has forgotten basic police ethics and instincts and mannerisms.*

*But Titus is not alone. There are many of such in the over 100,000-strong policemen and officers undertaking purely private duties in homes and offices of the wealthy and politicians. Some are used as drivers. Others as house help. Some policemen (and military men nowadays) hire themselves out to freight forwarders to accompany goods to their destinations for a fee.*

*Many of the policemen are sometimes used by their new paymasters to harass fellow Nigerians after a minor disagreement or quarrel. The use of such policemen has become a status symbol. The more policemen a politician surrounds himself with who carry bags to trot behind him, then, the politician feels the message of invisibility (sic) has been passed on. . Those are the men (and women) Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Ogbonna Onovo wants to recall back to pure police duties. He asked Police Commands in each state last week to open a register of personnel returning for re-assignment those who did not heed the order after seven days that ended yesterday would not be accommodated again in the Police Force. He said that the current total workforce of about 370,000 policemen was grossly inadequate to police a nation of over 150 million.*

*As at the time of going to press yesterday, many policemen had started complying while others wished the order would fizzle out*

*Sources at the Louis Edet House, Police Force Headquarters told The Guardian that "the present number of policemen is not enough to protect lives and property of all left alone to protect individuals no matter their status. We are no longer going to allow such illegalities to thrive".*

*Police Spokesman, Emmanuel Ojukwu told The Guardian on telephone: 'We have made it clear and our policemen have started returning back to their various postings''*

*Mr. Onovo last week said that over 100,000 policemen were working as private and corporate guards, contrary to the Federal Government's directive that they should go back to base.*

*He directed all heads of commands and formations to compile and forward the list of their returning personnel not later than yesterday.*

*He highlighted individuals entitled to police security as the President and his deputy, the Chief Justice, governors and their deputies, Secretary to the Government of the*



*Federation, President of Court of Appeal, Head of Service of the Federation, ministers, justices of the*

*Supreme Court, judges of the Appeal Court, the chief judge and grand khadi of a state, president of Customary Court of Appeal, local council chairmen and then: deputies, and Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC).*

*Others include Senate President and the deputy; Speaker, House of Representatives and the deputy; j and Speakers of States Houses of Assembly and their deputies.*

*In Kwara State, the order to return to base was being received with missed feelings by' some influential j Nigerians.*

*According to the leader of opposition in the state House of Assembly during the Third Republic, Chief Wole Oke; the president of Monja Development Union (ADU); Alhaji Abdul Kareem Olola Kasum; an Ilorin-based Human Rights lawyer, Abeny Mohanuned; a don of University of Horin who asked not to be named publicly; and Alhaji Kayode Yusuf, Special Adviser to Governor Bukola Saraki of Kwara State on Political Affairs, the order should be critically examined before being condemned or applauded.*

*Oke who is also the leader of Egbe Menifere in the state, described the order of Onovo as one usually associated with newly appointed public officers in the country, noting that at the saddle proper, such appointees would realise the difficulties inherent in the implementation of the order.*

*For Oke, the problem .of insecurity for which the Police was conceived tilts more to the side of the privileged members of the society than on the side of the .less privileged. He believes that group would ensure the police order does not work.*

*He said: "Can a house be divided against itself and still stand? The Police institution like every other institution in Nigeria is under the firm control of the capitalists. These people in turn are the ones who have the wherewithal to contest for political offices under t Nigerian present democratic system"*

*In the same vein, Kasum sarcastically asked for those who would benefit from such gesture even if it £ were eventually carried out.*

*According to him, "how many of us need the services vs of the police escorts in Nigeria except only those who have plundered our God's given resources? Only thoses who have converted what belongs to 150 million s Nigerians into their own. Only those who have l betrayed the oath of office they took to discharge their t duties faithfully.*

*"In any case, the police had never been the agent of the masses but that of the government with or without any withdrawal of the police, I don't see any benefit that will confer on the masses that are in the majority".*

*For Mohammed, "these people will fight back and get the orderlies restored. It is a usual bravado by every a newly appointed Police boss in the country. These people are very powerful. They are a cabal; anybody who a wants to last in power should not dare them.*

*"In any case, if the police are carrying out their constitutional duties as expected of them, people will not v resort into the use of private security arrangement?*

*They want protection at all cost for themselves, because the security system has collapsed".*

*Speaking on the development a university teacher described the proposition of the police boss as "a political hype" noting that only the wish of the appointer of Onovo would come to pass.*

*"It is a mere political hype. He is not independent of the judiciary, legislature and the executive. The larger percentage of those to be affected is connected with the power that be".*

*However, for Yusuff, Nigerians should restrain from (sic) subjective criticisms of the policies of Yar'Adua's government, n noting that every reformatory step would initially appear as missions impossible until when they materialize.*

*"Onovo is a police officer. He knows his onion and nobody from outside can know the job better than he does. I think we should first allow him to move before a criticizing his style of working".*

*Since the directive was issued, there have been concerns in Abia State about its implementation and the fate of c those that used to enjoy the privilege. Their fear is hinged on the rising criminal activities especially armed robbery and kidnapping in the state. There are others who cheated on their business partners or offended others one way or the other and therefore resorted to hiring policemen to d protect them from being harassed.*

*However, some policemen who are engaged in private duties do not buy the idea of the recall to base.*

*Two policemen that spoke on the issue in Umuahia said that they were officially assigned to a wealthy man who came to their station to lodge a complaint about his driver: "I and one other colleague were detailed to go and arrest the said driver. We did and brought him for inter rogation. Thereafter, we were asked to be protecting the man and we have done this for some months and even follow him everywhere".*

*Asked if they do house chores, they said "we report to his house in the mornings and when he is not travelling, we stay idle because he feeds us well, we even accompany the driver on school runs. Anything we do for him and his family, we do so on our own, because he treats us well"*



*A retired Deputy Police Commissioner who did not want his name in print, commended the Onovo order, saying that past IGPs lacked the courage to implement same stressing that Onovo was timely in taking the decision within his first week in office: "Let people be and act c uprightly so that they do not fear revenges from those l they had hurt".*

*The retired Police officer advised the new IGP to focus on redeeming the battered image of the Policemen, reboats their fallen morale, equip them in line with today's working kits and above all, strive to implement the internationally stipulated number of policemen to a group of people.*

*For John Kanu who said he is an un-employed graduate, "the sounds of sirens that go with unauthorized police escorts should now end if people are not allowed police attachments, they will change their attitude to life and s, start doing good business, stop cheating others or engage in fraud, living ostentatious lives and exhibiting their wealth to the envy of the majority poor around them".*

*On whether the withdrawal order would address crime and if those that get police attachment actually consider themselves free from attack, a few incidents that had occurred in the state are relevant. Last week, the Chairman of Aba South Local Council who had a number of security details reportedly escaped assassination near his house just because he was not in the convoy of his vehicles while three of his security aides were shot dead.*

*Also, the chairman of the State Independent Electoral Commission, Prof. Stephen Emejaiwe, had his Police detail when he was attacked and kidnapped. Other cases abound. That people are kidnapped or robbed even in the presence of their security details, suggests that the practice may just be psychological protection rather than a guarantee.*

*Worth recalling is the attack on the convoy of the Abia State governor, Dr. Theodore Orji about a year ago on his way to Port Harcourt Airport at about 9.00 am despite the number of armed security men attached to him. Many bank robberies that were successfully executed were despite the presence of policemen.*

*In Anambra State, the IGP's order also dominates discussions. Some see the order as a welcome development while others do not see it achieving the desired objectives.*

*A retired police officer, Chief Samuel Onuko, observed that the use of policemen as private guards or as messengers is not in the Police Act, and advised the Federal Government and police authorities to check the abuse.*

*Another retired police officer, Chief Emmanuel Nwonwu blamed the Commissioners of Police in the states who approved the postings because if they refuse, the postings would not have been made.*

*The former Publicity Secretary of All Nigeria Peoples Party, Prince Chuba Ikeagwu, regretted that in most cases, giving them police escorts indirectly protects fraudsters and criminals.*

*The Deputy Commissioner of Police in Anambra, Oshodi Glover said the Command has set in motion the process of retraining all those that would return they would be reassigned.*

*In Imo State, the number of returnees was just a trickle as at press time.*

*The abuse to which policemen were put in Owerri can be better imagined with an incident at Imo State University, Owerri junction, along Okigwe Road, when siren-blaring vehicles with policemen escort a set of goats at the back of a Hilux van.*

*In Taraba State, the order was also yet to be fully complied with as at yesterday.*

*Policemen on private duties in Jalingo undertake routine house chores for their masters. A recent situation was when a policeman attached to one of the council chairmen was seen in Jalingo main market loading his master's vehicle with tubers of yams while the master's wife and the grown-up children were seated dishing out orders.*

*A lady constable believes that working "with these politicians is just the best for some of us to keep life going". She prefers to remain with her civilian boss than going back to the barrack.*

*(Called from **The Guardian on Sunday**, August, 2009)*

### **3.2 Self-Assessment**

1. How can a writer make his or her writing very entertaining to the reader?
2. Explain what it means to contextualize humour writing features and opinions
3. Explain the difference between an Entertainment Writer and an Entertaining Writer
4. How can a writer who is not humourous naturally make some of his or her writings humourous and entertaining?

### **4.0 Conclusion**

Good journalistic writing requires the entertainment angle often. Humour, witty expressions and ability to observe can help attain the entertainment effect. Humour can come intuitively to the writer and can also be borrowed. There are books of jokes, comedy magazines and on-line websites devoted to jokes, humour and amusement. The writer can make the best of these opportunities. The important thing to note is that the power of humour and jokes lies in the manner of presentation, not necessarily in the joke itself. It must be contextually presented. When jokes are out-of-place, they destroy the beauty of the essay.

Entertainment is however not limited to humour. The organisation of the feature, analogies, contrasts, comparisons etc. all should make the piece pure fun to read without the message being in any way drowned!

## 5.0 Summary

- Entertainment journalists are not journalists who work for entertainment-oriented publications. They are journalists who entertain readers (listeners and viewers) through their writings. Great writers like Shakespeare, Mark Twain, Ray Ekpu, Olatunji Dare have great sense of humour.
- Narrators are slightly different from Entertainers in that the latter's primary focus is to create some excitement. To do this, he or she often needs to include some narratives. But the use of narratives is not peculiar to Entertainers. Many writers use one form of narrative or the other to establish create a background for the feature or opinion.
- There are very few Nigerian journalists who write purely to entertain readers. Among the contemporary writers, a few – like Adidi Uyo, Olusegun Adeniyi, Azubike Ishiekwe, Tony Ubani, Ikeddy Isuzugo, and Onoshie Nwabuiko - are well-known for their sense of humour. The editorial opinions of the *Vanguard* and *Nigerian Tribune* are also witty most of the times. The weekend newspapers and magazines are increasing incorporating entertaining elements in their features. The narrative form is used by most other writers – it is the commonest form of writing features, opinions and editorials in the Nigerian newspapers and magazines.

## 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment

1. Re-write the following report in a more entertaining, 'new journalism' format:

### ***Why tongue cancer is sexually transmittable***

*Issues relating to sex usually get the attention of many people. The topic becomes considerably more relevant, indications that people that indulge in unsafe sexual practices like oral sex, may be exposing themselves to some cancers that affect the throat, tonsils and the back of the tongue.*

*Although this may sound fearful, scientists have linked a virus Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), which is contracted through oral sex, to certain forms of cancer. HIV infection was found to be a much stronger reason for these cancers than even tobacco or alcohol use.*

*Although there is not strong proof yet, but based on correlations with sexual behaviour, and an abundance of similar findings around the world over the past few years, scientists said there is alarming medical concern that the infection was being acquired through unprotected oral sex.*

*Oral sex is stimulating the genitals with the mouth, lips and tongue: that is, kissing, sucking, licking and nibbling, many people use oral sex as foreplay or a substitute for intercourse, because it can be just as important and enjoyable as full sex.*

*However, the idea that oral sex is risk-free is not correct. It comes with significant risks, such as contracting sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhoea, Chlamydia, and HPV, HPV is a particularly scurrilous threat, since it incubates silently in the back of the mouth, and is now linked to a dangerous form of throat cancer in both men and women, which is similar to the one that arises in the cervix.*

*In some parts of the world, and increase in the number of younger people in their 30s and 40s, developing this cancer was attributed, in part, to a “change in sexual behaviour over the last decade.*

*HPV is everywhere, and the virus is just like HIV because it causes multiple types of cancer. Of the 120 strains isolated from humans, about 40 of which are in the mouth and genital tract, there is a vaccine for protecting against only four. These include those species that cause warts and cervical cancer.*

*HPV infection is the cause of the majority of cervical cancers, and 80 per cent of sexually active women can expect to have an HIV infection at some point in their lives. Most HIV infections clear with little or no symptoms but experts say, a small percentage of people who acquired high-risk strains may develop a cancer.*

*The study, which appeared in the **New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)**, showed that men and women who reported having six or more oral sex partners during their lifetime, had a nearly nine fold increased risk of developing cancer of the tonsils or at the base of the tongue. Of the 300 study participants, those infected with HPV were also 32 times more likely to develop throat cancer than those who did not have the virus.*

*Dr. Bukola Adeyemi, a consultant oral pathologist at the University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan, Oyo State explained that for oral cancers, HPV could be the cause. She stated that HPV could be introduced into the mouth through several ways, and that because the virus could live within saliva, it could easily be transmitted through saliva and oral sex.*

*According to the expert, “having oral cancer is more dependent on having HPV than gum diseases, a term that covers a lot of things like having sores in the mouth. Some people might say having any disease on the gum may make you prone to having cancer. There are some studies that suggest that disease in the mouth expose an individual to cancer, but the case is not the same with oral cancer”*

*“With cancer, the case is different. Cancer is based on immunity or how competent your immunity is, and it is believed that the more the exposure to some chronic infections, the higher the chances of coming down with cancer in some individuals.*

*For instance, malaria has been implicated in most common cancers of the white blood cell (lymphoma), in children.*

*Much as the way cancers occur is not exactly known she said. Some factors had been implicated in its cause and HPV, an infection, is one of such factors.*

*She explained that some factors control how genes proliferate, and that whenever there is a problem with the cell that suppresses the growth of abnormal cells, they continue to grow. “When cells are abnormal, the body recognizes this, and takes steps to destroy those abnormal cells, so that they do not proliferate or continue to grow. But since the suppressor gene is faulty, even though it is seeing the bad cells, there is no power to suppress it, so it would continue to proliferate. HPV has a power to affect some of these suppressor genes.”*

*Meanwhile, she pointed out that such things as smoking of tobacco and alcohol consumption are general predisposing factors that may accentuate the virus making an individual more susceptible to oral cancer. “All these are predisposing factors for cancer generally, and all are still based on genetic composition of the individual. Genetics is very important in anything that we do. It tells us how our body breaks down whatever we put into it. It has been proved that people that drink and or smoke are exposed to cancer, just as HPV infection makes an individual prone to having oral cancer.”*

*Dr. Adeyemi explained that cases of cancer affecting the tongue, tonsil and other are seen often in Nigeria. “We cannot say it is common. It depends on what you mean by common, but it is not like malaria, and we see them often.”*

*Dr. Diran Olabisi, an ear, nose and throat expert at Highland Specialist Hospital, Yemetu, Ibadan, Oyo State, confirmed there was the possibility of cancers of the mouth region arising from oral sex. “This is possible because several viruses can be contracted through sexual contact. Such viruses can misbehave at any time. Once the virus enters into your cell, it can take over the activity of that cell and transform it. The virus is initially benign, but over the years, these cells can transform to cancerous ones”.*

*The Johns Hopkins study took blood and saliva from 100 men and women newly diagnosed with oropharyngeal cancer which affects the throat, tonsils and back of the tongue. They also asked questions about sex practices and other risk factors for the disease, such as family history. They found that the virus – present in the tumours of 72 per cent of cancer patients in the study.*

*A Swedish study that appeared in the **International Journal of Cancer** also linked oral sex to tonsil cancer. Researchers at Sweden’s Karolinska Institute analysed cells taken from 98 patients with tonsil cancer between 2003 and 2007, and found 83 of them were positive for a stain of the HIV that caused this cancer. Tonsil cancer develops in a part of the throat known as the oropharynx. Symptoms include difficulty swallowing, sore throat, blood in the saliva, and weight loss.*

*Similarly, a reporting the May 2007 **New England Journal of Medicine** found that people who had oral sex with at least six partners were three times more likely to get throat cancer as those who were less sexually active.*

*Some experts said the introduction of the cervical cancer vaccine for girls and women, which covers the common stains of HPV, may also help reduce the incidence of some head and neck cancers.*

*(Culled from **Nigerian Tribune**).*

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**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATION****MODULE 5 - ANALYSIS OF STYLES OF SOME LEADING NIGERIAN JOURNALIST-WRITERS****UNIT 4 - THE LOGICAL POSIVISTS/ARGUMENTATORS****1.0 Introduction**

In the previous Units, we have examined journalistic writings in the form opinions (of individuals e.g. letters to the Editor and contributions to the Opinion-Editorial Page, and media organisations e.g. cover stories and editorials). The special thing about this kind of writing is that the writer takes a stand on an issue. The writer may sometimes try to persuade a target audience through the piece but sometimes he or she just indicates his or her side and that indicates that he or she is aware of the ‘other side’. These are writers who may be described as ‘Argumentators’. We may also refer to them as Logical Positivists in the sense that they often like to write from the logical viewpoint.

**2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this Unit, you should:

- Be able to display writing skills from outstanding Nigerian journalist-writers whose writings and reports are argumentative by nature.
- Demonstrate the skills of how to write journalistically in the argumentative form.

**3.0 Main Content****3.1 Examples of Argumentators in the Nigerian Media Industry.**

Names that readily come to mind in the Nigerian journalistic landscape include: Chinweizu, Pini Jason, Mumini Alao, Paul Bassey, Olusegun Adeniyi, Sam Amuka, Areoye Oyebola, Dele Giwa and *Daily Trust Newspaper (House Style)*. Most of these writers have been heavily-influenced by their philosophies of life and the environments in journalism in which they work(ed). Chinweizu is a conservative leftist; Oyebola was



editor of *Daily Times* in perhaps its most glorious era as a strong medium in the military-cum-civilian era; Basse and Alao have been sports journalists for decades and Sam Amuka, the publisher of *Vanguard* (both Oyebola and Amuka no longer write now), was most popular in the period that people bought newspapers and magazines in Nigeria principally because of the quality of opinion writers in the publications (1970s and early 1980s)

Logical positivists like to define, argue, convince and persuade. That is why some of them are popular more because of the views they hold rather than their styles of writing. They build their thoughts and arguments with evidence, from personal experience, their own primary research and secondary resources such as other published commentary or research.

They are also usually very analytical. They make critical examination of how something operates (and what causes something to happen or to behave the way it does). They also draw *inferences* – the conclusion a writer does from his or examination of the relationship between or among things, people or issues. How did it happen? What caused it? What will it lead to? Who should be blamed? How is it supposed to be done?

Within this shade of writers also we have the *definers* – writers who usually explain the meaning of terms, concepts and issues (as a kind of clarification) before they go ahead to shed light on it. In an *extended definition*, “the writer devotes an entire essay to exploring the meaning of a term or concept once again to show the reader a new way of looking at the topic or change the reader’s opinion while in *stipulated definition*, the writer asks the reader to agree to his or her persuasion. Some writers use the narrative approach to make arguments while others use evidence and syllogism (logical arguments) as in the following articles by Soji Omotunde and Mumini Alao respectively:

### **IDAHOSEA SPREADS THE GOSPEL**

**By Soji Omotunde**

ARCHBISHOP B.A. Idahosa came like a thunderbolt to the stage and the crowd roared to welcome him. "Praise the Lord!" he bellowed. "Alleluya," chorused his faithfuls and the expectant crowd. For majority of them the "Messiah" had come. The redeemer, the healer, the self-proclaimed archbishop of God's



evangelical mission, Idahosa had come to Lagos to preach the Word of God, perform miracles and, lest he should forget, to collect money in quantum.

A wooden platform had been constructed at the National Assembly end of the Tafawa Balewa Square, venue of the four-day crusade. It was an all-purpose platform. It served as a stage where Idahosa acted his part, as an altar where bags full of offerings were placed for the archbishop's blessings, and as a tabernacle for the very close lieutenants of the invading God's Marshall.

Before his arrival, the uniformed band (light blue shirt on navy blue breeches) had played like a possessed group to glorify their God and keep awake thousands of people who had come hours before the main event, some of whom had actually slept off under the wooden platform before the night's crusade on April 25. Ayo Oritsejafor, a born orator and his Yoruba interpreter, had first held the waiting crowd spellbound with their verbal acrobatics and a preaching technique that worked up the crowd into a sort of maniacal frenzy.

Then suddenly came the second coming, another triumphal entry, not of Christ, but of the archbishop and his wife under a heavy guard that only military governors could boast of. The husband appeared in a lotus-white suit with a collarless clergyman's shirt while the wife was in pure white attire laced with embroidery. Both wore black shoes to match the splendid turn-out.

Their appearance electrified the whole of Tafawa Balewa Square. Suddenly, everybody wanted to move to the wooden platform as if the nearer they were to the structure, the better the chance of being dipped in the water of miracle. There was no blaming them. The banner at the back of the stage said it all:

"EXPECT A MIRACLE." That's exactly what 90 per cent of the crowd had come to seek or witness. Some came in wheelchairs, some were led in by relatives - the blind, the cripple, the deaf, the epileptic, the paralytic - some on crutches while others walked in on their own with their afflictions.

"Everybody say alleluya!" Idahosa commanded the crowd. The response was deafening. "Raise up your hands if you want to prosper," he ordered again. Everybody, including security agents in uniform, raised their hands! Idahosa was no doubt in control of the crowd. From his looks and gesticulations he painted the picture of an old stern headmaster with a rod to back up his orders. But Idahosa carried no sticks; his "weapon" was the microphone through which he whipped up religious and economic sentiments in the crowd, and also confidence in his followers.

Before Idahosa came to town there had been reports that many false prophets were already at large in Lagos. Swindlers and tricksters had performed "miracles" here and there in the name of God. To some cynics these were simply con-men who used religion to eat fat on the desperation of the sick and the poor. Idahosa might not belong to this category. He might not be a "con-bishop and if he were there

was art in his method during his world outreach in Lagos, "How many of you are tired of poverty?" he asked. The response was automatic. "Who wants to prosper?" Idahosa asked again. Then he went on to narrate his own life story with the all-too-familiar from-rags-to-riches plot. For example, he did not wear a pair of shoes until he reached the age of 15.

Today he wears continental suits, a gold chain dangling on his robust neck and a pair of diamond shining shoes to match. "Do you want to prosper?" he asked once again. Everybody answered in the affirmative. Idahosa was not satisfied with the first response. "Say it loud," he echoed James Brown, a fellow traveller on the starvation-to-stardom road. The people were poor and not proud, ill and not happy, alive but not satisfied. They were all out for a miracle. They surged forward like tidal waves ready to drown Idahosa and his entourage on the platform.

That's it! Idahosa beamed the smile of satisfaction. His crowd psychology was working. His psychic power was yet to be applied though. There was method in that, too. The archbishop brought out a heavily laden envelope purported to contain N1,000 said to have been donated by a woman to offset the crusade expenses costing N143,000. "But for you here tonight, you don't have to pay anything." Praise the Lord! Alleluyah! Praise the Lord! Alleluya! "But you'll bring your own cheques or money tomorrow as offering!" Then he asked (the umpteenth time) whoever wanted prosperity to raise his hand and he would bless it but not before a small demonstration.

Idahosa called out his wife. Both put some money into a bag. It was a who-will-bell-the-cat strategy that worked like magic. Everybody dipped his hand in his pocket ready to offer something too but Idahosa outfoxed the fox.

Hold it, he commanded. Then he told the mammoth crowd of his family's material wealth. "We have children, we-have houses," he told them. In appreciation of that he and his wife had to double their offerings. Now he called on the thousands of expectant donors to dip their hands into their pockets again to add more to their originally intended donations, because "whatever you sow you'll reap." He used the biblical injunction to brighten them and ask them to raise whatever they had finally decided to offer. Thereafter, he called on ushers to go round with green polythene and white cloth bags to collect the offerings, which somebody humorously referred to as consultation fees.

With the accompaniment of hilarious music from the band, the offerings were collected from far and beyond. More than 500 bags were used in the collection. The sick donated. The ill contributed. Uniformed security agents joined the offering spectacle. Traffic wardens, boy scouts, soldiers, school children, women, ladies, young men, almost everybody contributed something into either the green or white bag. The music played. Idahosa danced. His wife gyrated on her body axis. The few whites on the platform also jived and clapped their hands. The World Outreach Television crew filmed every minute.

A playback would show Idahosa as he turned Akii Bua on stage, running, jumping and clapping his hands. When he looked down on the stage his black Mirror-shining shoes easily reflected the happiness on his face. He was so happy that he took over the control of the band as he oftentimes transmitted orders on which instrument to show prominence, the sax or the trumpet. The symphony was to herald the coming of the offerings and when the bags came from different directions under the full glare of the floodlights, the picture was a temptation to the eye. Money, money, money, bags of money, some filled to the brim, some half-filled, none empty. They just continued to pour in in different shapes, sizes and colours. It was money unlimited. When the last bag came, it formed the apex of the already formed mountain of money. It was another miracle; a Mount Sinai of money had been formed within 30 minutes. Wonders would never cease.

Idahosa and his assistants were already in ecstatic fits, singing, dancing, and clapping in a celebration of the offering. The sound of music, the rhythm of clippings, and the stamping of feet reverberated all over Tafawa Balewa Square. At the beckoning of Idahosa hands would sway this way and that way. Somebody in the crowd could not believe the magic behind it. "One man holding and controlling such a multitude?" he asked nobody in particular. Reverend Jim Jones couldn't have done better in his days before he took his flock to the mass abattoir in Jonestown in the celebrated Guyana tragedy of 1978.

After the mountain of money (which conservative estimates put at about N500,000 for the night) had been moved away in special trunks, the actual healing exercise began. A stiff neck relaxed. Rewane, a three-year-old boy, was able to move his right hand for the first time, according to his mother. A blind boy climbed the stage and said he was seeing the world for the first time. A six-year-old dumb boy called "papa" for the first time. A paralytic woman packed up her wheelchair and was ushered to the stage but she was, perhaps, too exhausted or too bewildered to stand straight. But many were not as lucky. A blind boy was seen being led away quietly by his relation. No miracle had happened to him. Perhaps he did not have enough faith. Perhaps he did not pay enough "consultation fee". Perhaps it was not his lucky day, Perhaps...

But one man was the luckiest. He was Idahosa himself, a self-confessed protagonist of self-preservation. He made sure the money came first. Then the miracle. He used to be known as Reverend but of late he had climbed more steps to become Archbishop. If followership is anything to go by, if money is the yardstick, if charisma is the thing, Idahosa may soon become the pope and, even, the "arch-pope" of his World Outreach, that is, if there is any provision for such a title.

Meanwhile, Idahosa continues to laugh his way to the banks after each night of "expect- a-miracle" crusade. It is a paying business, no doubt.

*(Newswatch, 1986)*

## BETWEEN HOPE AND EXPECTATION

By Mumini Alao

Some times, it can be difficult for a columnist to completely remove his bias when writing about a subject. But that is exactly what I have set out to do today in my analysis of last Saturday's 2002 World Cup draw which pitched Nigeria against Argentina, England and Sweden in the first round.

Even though I realize that my opinions are well respected on these matters for which I thank my readers, my objective here is to present the hard facts of the World Cup draw as they affect Nigeria, and leave my readers to draw their own conclusion.

I admit, though, that my bias for Nigeria may still slip through even in my choice of words. That is inevitable but I'm sure the point is made.

I have drawn up a table of 10 indices (see table a few pages ahead) to guide us in this process of assessing, without any sentiments, Nigeria's REAL chances in a World Cup group that everybody has acknowledged as "the toughest of the lot," using the exact words of a BBC television analyst.

The first point we need to establish is that Nigeria's presence in the group is actually part of the reasons why it has been tagged 'the toughest'. In spite of the presence of Argentina, England and Sweden, the group would not have been tagged the "Zone of Death" if the fourth team had been Costa Rica, for instance, or even USA.

Fact Number One, therefore, is that by virtue of its impressive outing at USA '94, its success at Atlanta '96 and its unpredictability at France '98, Nigeria is part of the "problem" in Group F which makes a straight-forward forecast about the likely qualifiers rather tricky for soccer pundits.

Put another way, Argentina, England and Sweden will have to worry about Nigeria as much as Nigeria will worry about them. From that standpoint, you can say the respect between Nigeria and its rivals is mutual.

Unfortunately, that is where the comparison in Nigeria's favour, if it is a "favour" at all, ends. By the time we get down to the key facts about the four teams, Nigeria ends up at the bottom of the ladder as shown on our table of indices.

I have tried to be very dispassionate in compiling this table but I must quickly admit that it is not error free. Some of the indices I have used may be debatable, but even if we allow an error-margin of +2 or -2, the best Nigeria will probably emerge with is third place behind Argentina and England. Either way, fourth or third, we crash out after the first round!

Now, let's look at how I arrived at the score for each country under each index of analysis. I have awarded four points for the best team in each category, three for second best, two for third best and one for fourth. In some cases, there are ties.

### **World Cup pedigree**

Argentina, two-time world champions, and twice runners-up are the clear winners here. England, winners in 1966, are second while Sweden which finished third at USA '94 are third. All three countries have also been to more World Cup finals than Nigeria. They have greater pedigree.

### **Recent World Cup experience**

Argentina again are the best here with their quarter-finish at France '98. England and Nigeria tie for second place with second round finishes, while Sweden score no points here as they didn't qualify at all for France '98.

### **Outcome of last confrontations**

Argentina have had the best of Nigeria (2-1 at USA (94) and England (penalty shoot-out win at France (98) in their last outings. England also beat Nigeria 1-0 last time they met at Wembley and Sweden also won 3-1 when they last met Eagles in Stockholm. You could argue that England and Sweden beat Nigeria with home advantage on their side, but that also puts them in a confident mood that they can beat the Eagles again.

### **Quality of current players**

Argentina are brimming with quality players at the moment and that is why they are one of the favourites to win the World Cup. Arguably, Nigeria can rub shoulders with England in this department, whereas the only big star Sweden have is Henrik Larsson of Celtic.

### **Quality of current team**

Again, Argentina are ahead with England and Sweden coming next in that order with their better organization as a unit. Nigeria have always struggled to knit its quality of players into a formidable unit. The team therefore performs in fits and starts

### **Manner of qualification**

Argentina steam-rolled every opposition in South America including Brazil to qualify for 2002 with so many games to spare. Sweden were not as convincing, but they didn't struggle, so they rate behind Argentina in this category. Nigeria did

not qualify until the last match against Ghana while England did not qualify until the last minute against Greece!

### **World rating by neutral observers**

Argentina tops again as the whole world expects them to bid strongly for the trophy itself in Korea/Japan. Michael Owen has pushed up England's ratings, too, but the world is not expecting that much from Nigeria and Sweden.

### **World ranking by FIFA**

Again, Argentina are ahead of the other three with Nigeria languishing at the bottom.

### **Element of surprise**

Perhaps the biggest armour Nigeria will still rely on at the World Cup is the element of surprise which has won the Super Eagles so many battles in the past. But, with Argentina looking for revenge over its Atlanta '96 final defeat and England ,ery familiar with the likes of Kanu, Finidi and Babayaro whom they see every week in the Premiership, it's doubtful if the Eagles can catch anybody by surprise again. The opposition will be ready for battle from the first whistle. Nonetheless, Nigeria will hold the ace to spring a surprise because of its "relative" under-dog status. Four points here for Nigeria.

### **Element of luck**

Luck is not strictly an index of football analysis because it doesn't follow any specific pattern. The lucky team today might be unlucky tomorrow. But luck is part of the game, anyway, so I have provided for it in this analysis with obvious conclusions: same point for each team.

### **TOTAL SCORE**

Argentina 31; England 23; Sweden 19; Nigeria 18. Likely outcome: First Round exit for Nigeria!

Now, the exercise I have conducted above is to bring the hard facts on the table for Nigerian fans to ponder. I am fully aware that football being a very dynamic game, some of the postulations I have made here may be thrown in the thrash bin when the matches get under way.

But then, football analysis will continue to be based on some of the indices I have listed and the outcome of matches will also continue to be predicted in consideration of the same indices.



	<b>Indices of Analysis</b>	<b>Arg.</b>	<b>Nig.</b>	<b>Eng.</b>	<b>Swe.</b>
1.	World Cup Pedigree	4	1	3	2
2.	Recent World Cup experience	4	3	3	
3.	Outcome of last confrontation	3	2	2	
4.	Quality of present players	4	3	3	2
5.	Quality of present team	4	1	3	2
6.	Manner of qualification for 2002	4	2	1	3
7.	World rating by neutral observers	4	2	3	2
8.	World ranking by FIFA	4	1	3	2
9.	Element of surprise	4	2	3	
10.	Element of luck	1	1	1	1
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>19</b>

The objective of the whole exercise is not that the subsequent forecast must come to pass. The objective usually is to provide an INFORMED OPINION on what to EXPECT. And that brings me to the title of today's article.

What do you expect from the Super Eagles at Korea/Japan, considering the nature of their first round grouping? If you throw the question back at me, I have for you a ready answer: DO NOT EXPECT the Eagles to qualify from this group; you can only HOPE they will qualify.

Hope and expectation are two words so close in meaning, yet so far apart in reality. The dictionary defines "hope" as a feeling of expectation and desire; while expectation is defined as a more confident feeling that something WILL happen.

Outside the indices listed in the foregoing analysis, perhaps what can raise Nigeria's chances from hope to expectation is if the opposing teams burst into internal crises, lose key players to injury or press any other self-destruct buttons that will turn the advantage in favour of the Super Eagles.

The other factor could be if the Eagles win the 2002 Nations Cup in Mali and thus find a new rhythm and confidence that is currently lacking in many departments of the team.

A telephone caller to Complete Sports immediately after the draw, Junior Chukwudi of Lagos Island, declared matter-of-factly that Nigeria is the "weakest team in our group." On the basis of our analysis here, I think Chukwudi is right.

On the contrary, my good friend Kunle Raji of Global Sports Concepts, organisers of the record-breaking Taribo and Friends Classic in 1999, says the tough draw will be a self-motivation for the Super Eagles to prepare hard for the World Cup.

"If we had drawn a weak group, our boys would have taken preparations for granted again," Raji said. He is right, too.

Between Chukwudi and Raji, however, lies my advice for readers on the Super Eagles World Cup draw: you can HOPE for the best (winning the trophy?), but you must EXPECT the worst - a first round exit!

(*Complete Football*, December 3, 2001)

COMMENTS: In Omotunde's piece, the literary style is the plank of the argument while in Alao's, it is the logical presentation of facts. Generally, the classification of Nigerian writers in this Module into four classes based on style is for mainly for learning purposes. Accomplished writers occasionally veer off their traditional style of writing to make statements when they know that other forms would create better delivery. However, the classification we have used here fairly accurately describes the most dominant styles of the journalist-writers used as case studies. In writing causal analysis, the good feature writer is always conscious of focus – is he or she looking particularly at the cause of the phenomenon (e.g. electoral fraud in Nigeria) or the effects or both. He or she must establish a very clear premise. The reader must know the basis of the writer's argument . Some writers let the premise out of the bag by first stating their thesis statement clearly and the reader instantly knows the direction in which the writer wants to go. Some others like to present all the scenarios and then take a position. Some others just paint the scenarios and make the foolish positions so obvious that it is not even necessary for the them (writers) to indicate a position.

In making definitions, it is always good if the writer distinguishes 'subjective definition' from 'objective or standard definition'. Argumentative features require more painstaking organisation than other forms of features. Once the writer can present the facts of the case in a way a right-thinking person can understand them, he or she would have succeeded in creating the intended meaning. On the other hand, an expressionist can lay hold on just one or two fragments of strong facts and create an intended meaning out of it (them).

Logical fallacies (errors of reason) are sometimes deliberately used by intelligent writers to make sound arguments or weaken the arguments of antagonists. The use of logical fallacies by journalist-writers and media organisations remain very controversial but in practice these fallacies remain some of the best ways to make sound arguments.



### **3.2 Self-Assessment Questions**

1. What characteristics have writers/media which adopt the argumentative form?
2. Explain with examples from Omotunde's article how style is important in making arguments.
3. Explain with examples from Alao's article how logical argument is important in making arguments.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

Argumentative writers/media usually define the subject or object of the feature and make process or causal analysis in the form of sharing knowledge or meaning or from the point of view of persuading their audience to accept their views. Most opinion articles, editorials and sometimes in-depth magazine articles in the Nigerian media are written in this form. However, other forms of writing can also be used for argumentative and analytical purposes.

### **5.0 Summary**

Not all good writing derives from writing skills. Numerous journalists and media titles in Nigeria earned their sterling reputation in journalism mainly from abilities to present factual, logically-sound editorial opinions and clinically analyzed stories. In this case, the strength of the features is more in the abilities to reason and make intelligible conclusions high above the ability to write.

Some writers depend on creative writing to make arguments while others depend on syllogism (logical argumentation). Many popular media organisations and writers derive their popularity from the use of logical fallacies although the appropriateness of use of such fallacies in journalistic writing remains controversial ethically-speaking.

### **6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment**

1. Write an argumentative feature of not more than 150 words on why the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, should not be appointed by the President of Nigeria.

2. Take a random sample of five (5) Nigerian opinion articles and five (5) features and copy out 'argumentative aspects' in the publications (phrases, sentences, and paragraphs).

### **7.0 References/Further Reading**

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**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATION**

**MODULE 6 - ADVANCED WRITING SKILLS WORKSHOP**

**UNIT 1 - COMMON FEATURE WRITING ERRORS (GRAMMAR)**

## **1.0 Introduction**

We started this Course by looking at the Basic Tools of writing and we identified Grammar and Style as two of them. It is very appropriate to also end the Course by re-visiting those two areas of writing. This Unit provides some ways out of most grammatical errors committed by journalists and other writers who communicate in the English Language.

Adidi Uyo (2006) notes: “Regardless of the main factor responsible for them, writing errors pertain to all units of writing, and, indeed, to all concomitants of language, as well. Units of writing include words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs and composition. Besides these six units are punctuation marks.” According to Uyo, the three concomitants of language are grammar, logic and rhetoric.

## **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this Unit, you should:

- Have been able to identify some grammatical errors frequently found in the Nigerian press.
- Be able to identify some principles of writing that would help you write with very limited grammatical errors.

## **3.0 Main Content**

### **3.1 Grammatical Errors**

#### *Sentence Errors*

Remember that we said a sentence *is a group of words expressing a complete thought*. One reliable way to ensure you do not commit sentence errors is to be sure that the words in every sentence you construct represent a complete thought. For example, the following sentence represents a complete thought of the writer: *The President plans to visit the soldiers in the hospital*. This next sentence represent an incomplete thought of the writer: *The plans*. Sentence errors come in many ways. Below are some of them and how you can get around them.

1. *The verb in the sentence must agree with its subject in number.*

**Wrong:** The inordinate ambition of politicians have thrown us into a mess.

**Right:** The inordinate ambition of politicians has thrown us into a mess.

**Why:** The noun ‘ambition’ which the verb ‘thrown’ qualifies is in singular form hence must take ‘has’. “Politicians” did not throw, “ambition” did.

2. *The pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number as well as in person and gender.*

**Wrong:**The church has an obligation to support their members

**Right:**The church has an obligation to support its (or her) members

**Why:** The antecedent is “the church” (and it is singular here). It cannot take a plural pronoun (their). If the antecedent had been plural (churches), it must take a plural pronoun (their).

3. *As a beginner, make your sentence as simple (and short) as much as possible until you master the rules of clauses and phrases. Lack of the knowledge of these rules of syntax (sensible relationships of words) lead to faulty pronoun reference and run-on sentences.*

4. *Avoid Run-on sentences.* When two complete sentences are run together needlessly they are known as run-on sentences. It is committed often when writers use a comma instead of semicolon to separate independent clauses and a conjunction is omitted.

**Wrong:** Drugs are good for persons living with HIV/AIDS, doctors often advice them to use drugs.

- Right:**(a)Re-write into two sentences: “Drugs are good for persons living with HIV/AIDS. Doctors advise people with HIV/AIDS diseases to take drugs.”
- (b) Use semi-colon in place of comma. “Drugs are good for persons living with HIV/AIDS doctors often advice them to use drugs.”
- (c) Use a coordinate conjunction, e.g. ‘hence’. “Drugs are good for persons living with HIV/AIDS; hence doctors often them to use drugs.”
- (d) Use a phrase in place of the initial independent clause. “Drugs being good for person with HIV/AIDS, doctors advise patients to use them.”
- (e) Subordinate the first independent clause into a clause. “Because drugs are good for persons living with AIDS, doctors advise HIV/AIDS patients to use drugs.”

5. ***Faulty pronouns cause constipation in sentences; avoid them.***

**Wrong:** It is not right for the National Assembly, who swore to defend the Constitution, to negate the laws made by them.

**Right:** It is not right for the National Assembly whose members swore to defend the Constitution, to negate the laws made by it.

**Why:** National Assembly is an inanimate object; hence cannot take ‘who’. It is also in singular for in this sentence and cannot take ‘them’. The confusion may have arisen because the National Assembly is made up of ‘many people’.

6. ***Avoid faulty case of pronoun in your sentences.***

**Wrong:** Who’s fooling who?

**Right:** Who is fooling whom?

**Why:** There cannot be two nominative cases in the same sentence; one must give way to accommodate the person who receives the action. The simple way to get it right is to use “whom” for the

person that receives an action (possessive) and “who” for the person giving the action (objective). Thus, we can write: “Who do you think you are, anyway?” “The suspect, who claims to be a Briton, has been telling lies all day. “To whom shall I sent the document?” “For whom is the bag of rice?” “Whom do you think the judges will select?”, “Who will be the judges?”

**7. Don't fuse your sentences.** When you have several Ideas that you want to put in a sentence, subordinate the minor ideas into clauses. The important idea may be at the beginning or at the end of the sentence. The minor idea is put into a subordinate clause or phrase.

**Wrong:** Okwaraji had been in a coma for several hours when he died.

**Right:** After being in a coma for several hours, Okwaraji died.

**Why:** In journalist writing especially, the main action is served the reader first and the minor action next. The element of timeliness is important.

- 8. Use compound-complex sentence very sparingly.** This kind of sentence has at least two independent clauses and one or more dependent clause(s) which is (are) subordinated. It makes it difficult for the reader to follow your line of thought makes the sentence too long and often it makes you punctuate wrongly.
- 9. Watch out for correlative conjunctions.** These kinds of conjunctions are always used in pairs and you cannot switch them without committing grammatical error. ‘Both’ goes with ‘and’; ‘neither’ goes with ‘nor’ (not ‘or’); ‘neither – nor’; ‘either – or’; ‘although – yet’; ‘if – then’ etc.
- 10. Never use reflexive pronouns as part of a compound subject or compound subject of a verb or preposition.**

**Wrong:** Abdullahi and myself are going to the press conference

**Right:** Abdullabi and I are going to the press conference

**Why:** Reflexive pronouns are used as ‘intensive pronouns’ for emphasis, e.g. *I myself will sign the document or The MD himself will sign the document.*

11. *The expletive ‘it’ and the pronoun ‘it’ should not be used in the same sentence.*

**Not good:** It is best to keep the soap on hand for a few weeks so that it will shrink slightly before it is used for sculpturing.

**Good:** If possible, keep the soap on hand for a few weeks so that it will shrink slightly before you use it for sculpturing.

12. *Do not use a pronoun that references more than one antecedent in the same sentence.*

**Wrong:** He sent for Amadi and told him that when John was added to the reportorial team, he would take care of photography.

**Right:** He sent for Amadi and told him that John would serve as the photographer of the reportorial team.

13. *Always remember that the indefinite article ‘a’ is used before words that begin with a consonant or a consonant sound.*

**Wrong:** It an historic moment; he made it in just a hour.

**Right:** It is a historic moment; he made it in just an hour.

**Why:** The ‘h’ in historic is pronounced; it is not pronounced in ‘hour’.

14. *Do not omit transition words, phrases or clauses that help make the connection between the parts clear to the reader.*

**Poor though grammatically correct:** Jack is protected in his job under the Civil Service Act. He is subjected to tremendous pressures.

**Better:** Jack is protected in his job under the Civil Service Act.  
*However*, he is subjected to tremendous pressures.

**15. Punctuations can mess up the meaning of your feature: watch them carefully.**

Uyo has listed four (4) punctuation errors that the writer must avoid.  
These are: Missing Apostrophe, Comma Peccadillo, Effete Comma and Inapt Semicolon.

**Wrong:** Our leaders rejection of Temile as captain of the boat is not proper. (*Missing apostrophe*)

**Right:** Our leader's (or leaders', if used in the plural form) rejection of Temile as captain of the boat is not right.

**Wrong:** Wherever they are North or South the Igbos are industrious.  
(*Comma Peccadillo* – peccadillo means 'a small sin or fault'.

A misplaced comma, or full stop, has been object of litigations in the law court. In writing, punctuation should not be overlooked.

Consider this: These are criminals President Olokodana, his wife Angel are the people we must watch. The full stop that is missing after 'criminals' has completely altered the meaning of the sentence in the foregoing example, in which the writer did not mean to say the President is a criminal.)

**Right:** Wherever they are, North or South, the Igbos are industrious.

**Wrong:** Read my lip, I'll never join politics. (*Effete comma* – using a comma to perform a function that is better left for another punctuation mark, because a comma does not have the power to do it.)

**Right:** Read my lips: I'll never join politics.

**Wrong:** The North's bid for power is in part a response to this withdrawal factor; this marginalization of the North by the government. (*Inapt semicolon* – you cannot use a semicolon to separate mere phrases or words, except in enumerations and, even in these, its use with anything less weighty than a clause is somewhat clumsy. (Uyo, 2006).



**Right:** The North's bid for power is part of a response to this withdrawal facto – this marginalization of the North by the government.

### 3.2 Self-Assessment Questions

1. List the common sources of grammatical mistakes in writing, stating examples of your own to illustrate them
2. Explain five ways in which run-on sentences can be corrected.

## 4.0 Conclusion

Journalistic writing requires three basic things to good success: grammar, logic and rhetoric. Some scholars argue that in journalism, especially regarding 'new journalism' the writer is not constrained by the rules of grammar while some others insist that all writing must be guided by the grammatical rules governing the language used for the write-up. The conclusion that may be drawn from the debate is that a skilful writer is like a general in the army. Unlike a rank-and-file officer, a general does break some rules and no eye-brows can be raised. Skilled writers do break the rules of grammar to achieve certain effects. For example, a writer once described a man as "a very beautiful human being". The rules of lexicon refer to the female as beautiful and the male as handsome, but this writer decided to break the rules to achieve a special effect. It was not done out of ignorance. Thus, without basic knowledge of grammar, still, hardly can anyone succeed as a writer.

## 5.0 Summary

Writing errors include words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, composition and punctuation. This Unit dwelt on sentences, clauses and phrases.

Sentence errors arise often from syntax – relationships of words – and use of parts of speech – especially the use or abuse of verbs, pronouns and construction of clauses. The commonest errors in this regard occur when the verb does not agree with the subject, when the pronoun does not agree with its antecedent in number and in person and in gender, when two or more complete sentences are put together as one sentence, and when pronouns are used wrongly. Punctuation and inaccuracy of spelling are also common errors in writing which every journalist must pay attention to.

## 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment

### 1. Correct the following news story:

The United Nations delegates arrived safe yesterday, raising hopes for Nigeria children.

The head of the delegation, Dr. Cho Yung told correspondents a hour after arriving at the Lagos Airport that “we shall spend close to a billion naira to save poor Nigerian children in the next two years.”

“The president of Nigeria and the Opposition has played well on both offence and defence and drew well throughout the year,” he stated.

He said many people had asked him for who the huge money was meant and that he always told them “it is to keep the hopes of Nigerian children alive.”

The UN leader announced that the body would also support small-size countries in Africa but emphasized the need for them to be more prudent.

The press, he indicated, are responsible for enlightening the people on the benefits of the support and how they can make the best use of the support being given.

He said if the UN had opened an office in Nigeria last year, that office could have facilitated the support.

“When in need, the crying of children becomes loud. We have heard it from the United Nations office and we have come to offer help,” he remarked.

On the role state governments would play in the project, the UN representation said states would play adversary role.

“It is alright if they give support. Forty-four of us came all the way. If thirty-six can support, we can go higher.” He added.

The work will commence next week bearing any hitches.

3. Pick any edition of *Punch Newspaper* and search for any grammatical mistakes in the features, stories, advertisements, headlines and captions.

## **7.0 References/Further Reading**

Awoyinfa M., and Igwe, D., (2003). *The Art of Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines*. Lagos: McDee Communications.

Okoye, I., (1998). *Feature Writing: Theory and Practice*. Lagos: Mic Pac Ventures Ltd.

Phar, Donald and Busceni, Santi V., (2005). *Writing Today: Contexts and Options for the Real World – brief edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATION**

**MODULE 6 - ADVANCED WRITING SKILLS WORKSHOP**

**UNIT 2 - FEATURE WRITING TIPS (STYLE)**

## **1.0 Introduction**

In their pocket-size classic, *The Elements of Style*, William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White describe what style in writing is all about:

Style is an increment in writing. When we speak of Fitzgerald's style, we don't mean his command of the relative pronoun; we mean the sound his words make on paper. Every writer, by the way he uses the language, reveals something of his spirit, his habits, his capacities, his bias. This is inevitable as well as enjoyable. All writing is communication; creative writing is communication through revelation – it is the self escaping into the open. No writer long remains incognito.

Ultimately, your writing style tells much about who you are. You may be able to write argumentatively, descriptively, in the narrative form and so on, yet if you are a good writer, there must still be that 'you' element about how you write. If you compare the writings of Ray Ekpu and Dan Agbese, for example, you will discover that they write basically in the same way. Yet, you would still be able to see some traits which make the two great writers different. That is the reason copy-cats do not often become successful in writing.

## **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- Discover some errors of style frequently found in the Nigerian press.
- Demonstrate good application of style.

## **3.0 Main Content**

### **3.1 How Writing Style Can be Improved Upon**

Strunk and White listed 21 ways to improve style in writing as follow:

1. **Place yourself in the background:** To achieve style, begin by affecting none – that is, place yourself in the background so that your style will naturally emerge. Don't try to adopt a particular style. Just allow 'yourself' within to come out.
2. **Write in a way that comes naturally.** Use words and phrases that come readily to hand. Note Strunk Jr. and White: "The use of language begins with imitations. The infant imitates the sounds made by its parents; the child imitates first the spoken language, then the stuff of books. The imitative life continues long after the writer is on his own in the language, for it is almost impossible to avoid imitating what one admires. Never imitate consciously, but do not worry about being an imitator; you write in a way that comes naturally, you will echo the halloos that bear repeating."
3. **Work from a suitable design.** Before beginning to compose something, gauge the nature and extent of the enterprise and work from a suitable design. Have a rough idea of how you want to approach the feature – for instance are you going to start from a particular incident and go on to the general? Are going to make a poser and analyze it? When you become versatile your emotions will definitely influence your design.
4. **Write with nouns and verbs.** Strunk and White encourage writers to more often write in nouns and verbs than with adjectives and adverbs.
5. **Revise and rewrite.** No matter how gifted a writer is, often he or she has one or two corrections to make in his or her first draft. Re-writing should not be considered as optional or avoidable. Re-writing is part of writing.
6. **Don't overwrite.** Too many words may not be verbose sometimes but they choke your thoughts. Don't use sickly words and avoid overblown phrases.
7. **Avoid the use of qualifiers.** According to Strunk and White, "qualifiers – rather, very, little, pretty...are the leeches that infest the pond of prose, sucking the blood of words."
8. **Do not affect a breezy manner.** Be compact, informative and unpretentious in your writing. It is not all the thoughts that come into your head when writing a composition that you have to put down. It is also not in the order the thoughts come that you always have to put them down in the final article.
9. **Don't overstate.** Avoid the over-usage of superlatives (especially the word 'very'). Let the reader be able to trust your judgment.

10. **Use orthodox spelling.** For instance, do not write ‘nite’ for ‘night’ or ‘thru’ for ‘through’. Be consistent in your spelling. Do not mix American standard of spelling English Language with the British English (e.g. The Labour Center has been opened.) Some media organisations accept either; most organisations in Nigeria accept only the British English spelling.
11. **Do not explain too much.** Don’t overwork your adverbs. You do not have to explain in detail all the time. Include details that contribute to the meaning you are passing across.
12. **Do not create awkward adverbs.** *He said consolingly; He walked leisurely into the well-lit room confidently.* Avoid using ‘ly’ (building your own adverbs) too often.
13. **Make the reader know who is speaking.** In dialogues, you must let the reader know who is speaking. Sometimes in long dialogues, some writers assume the reader could rightly guess the speakers. But caution should be exercise to avoid getting the reader confused.
14. **Avoid fancy words.** Do not be tempted by a twenty-dollar word when there is a ten-centre handy, ready and able. Example:

*The Central Bank of Nigeria is repositioning itself to continue the consolidation exercise. It will be recalled that the exercise started five years ago.*

In these statements, ‘repositioning’, ‘exercise’ and ‘it will be recalled’ are fancy words and phrase that add no meaning to the statements. A simple way to avoid fancy words is to try to be very simple – more or less conversational – language. *The Central of Nigeria plans to continue strengthening the banks. The programme started five years ago.* ‘Exercise’ and ‘it will be recalled’ are two demons that the have refused to be exorcised from Nigerian journalese for decades! They are useless words (unless you use ‘exercise’ to mean physical training or tests).

15. **Do not use dialect unless your ear is good.** If you speak more than one language, you lexis and structure of the different languages could create some confusion. Sometimes the structures of the different languages agree; sometimes they don’t. When he is longs for food seriously, the Yoruba man would say “*Ebi n pa mi*” which transliterates “*Hunger is killing me.*” The Englishman would however say “I am very hungry” to describe the same situation.

16. **Be clear.** “Clarity is not the prize in writing, nor is it always the principal mark of a good style. There are occasions when obscurity serves a literary yearning, if not a literary purpose, and there are writers whose mien is more overcast than clear. But since writing is communication, clarity can only be a virtue... Even to a writer who is being intentionally obscure or wild of tongue we can say, ‘Be obscure clearly! Be wild of tongue in a way we can understand!’” (Strunk Jr. and White, 1979). When you stare at a sentence or paragraph that is loaded with emptiness, start reconstructing it afresh.
17. **Do not inject opinion unless there is a good reason for its being there.** As we pointed out in previous Units, sports writing and opinion features seem to be the only exceptions here.
18. **Use figures of speech appropriately.** For example, simile is a common device and a useful one, but when it comes in rapid fire, it destroys the beauty of prose
19. **Do not take shortcuts at the cost of clarity.** For instance, do not use initials for names of organisations or movements unless you are sure the initials will readily be understood. Write out the full meaning in the first appearance of the acronym and use the acronym only in subsequent mention.
20. **Avoid foreign languages.** Many writers show off with their knowledge of Latin, French, etc. Write in entirely one language except borrowed words would add to more meaning.
21. **Prefer standard to the offbeat.** From time to time, some words become ‘popular’ in everyday use of a language. Be careful in ‘joining them’. *It is not a good habit to flash clients.* When used in Nigeria, it means ‘it is not a good habit to beep a client’s phone so that he or she could call back’. The latter contains more words but it conjures better meaning.

### 3.2 Self-Assessment Questions

- 1 List and explain briefly the 21 suggestions by Strunk Jr. and White on effective writing.
- 2 Explain how Grammar can hinder or enhance style.

## 4.0 Conclusion

Generally, always remember that vigorous writing is concise. “A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph to unnecessary sentences, for the same

reason that a drawing should have not unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts.” ( Strunk Jr. and White, 1979). Grammatical rules only serve as the manuals of writing – very much the same as the manual for operating a piano. The sounds that come out of the piano are what tell us who the player is. Style represents the ‘self’ (writer) and the rules of language.

## 5.0 Summary

Watch your sentences (let every word play an important role), paragraphs (they represent coherence of thoughts) and tense.

Strunk Jr. and White give 21 tips on style in English Language writing. These are:

Put yourself in the background; write in a way that comes naturally; work from a suitable design; write with nouns and verbs; revise and rewrite; do not overstate; avoid the use of qualifiers; do not affect a breezy manner; use orthodox spelling; do not explain too much; do not construct awkward adverbs; Do not use dialects unless your ear is good; be clear; avoid foreign languages; prefer the standard English Language; do not inject opinions and do not use shortcuts at the cost of clarity.

## 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

*Rewrite the following feature in two ways:*

1. As Dan Agbese would write it.
2. As Mumini Alao would write it.

### **Aloe Vera: Natural cure for *psoriasis***

If you have tried many different remedies to treat psoriasis with no luck, maybe Aloe Vera will be the last remedy you will need to try. For years, Aloe Vera has been used topically for minor burns, sunburn and insect bites, but in the last decade, however, there has been strong evidence indicating that Aloe Vera is a proven natural cure for psoriasis.

Originally from Africa, Aloe Vera is a succulent plant that has over 200 species and grows in arid regions all over the world. Able to thrive both indoors and out, this plant is a popular choice for home gardeners as it's easy to maintain and offers medicinal uses. Aloe leaves contain a clear gel that is often used as a topical ointment.



In a clinical study in support of Aloe Vera for the treatment of psoriasis, experts found that Aloe Vera had a cure rate of 83.3 per cent compared to placebo at 6.6 per cent. Overall, there was a significant reduction in all aspects of the psoriasis. Patients' psoriasis plaques reduced in number and there was reduced discolouration.

Psoriasis is an auto-immune disease characterised by excessive multiplication of skin cells commonly seen around the elbows and knees and other areas such as the scalp.

The psoriatic skin appears as red patches covered by thick, dry and silvery scales. Psoriasis is an inheritable skin disease and is often accompanied by arthritis. Many psoriasis patients often complain of arthritic pains in the hands and feet.

The study carried out in Belgium in 1995 had 60 psoriasis patients participating in the double blind placebo-controlled study that had them apply 0.5 per cent Aloe Vera extract in a water-based cream. The cream or gel was applied to the affected area three times daily for five consecutive days at a time and for a minimum 'of four weeks.

The scientists said its protective effect against psoriasis lasted for almost a year after treatment was stopped, while some patients did not see a return of the psoriasis.

In their publication in the journal, *Tropical Medicine International Health*. they wrote, "the findings of this study suggests that topically applied Aloe Vera extract 0.5 per cent in a hydrophilic cream is more effective than placebo, and has not shown toxic or any other objective side-effects. Therefore, the regimen can be considered a safe and an alternative treatment to cure patients suffering from psoriasis."

Also, a recent research presented at the International Congress of Dermatology, revealed promising results in the use of Aloe Vera to treat plaque psoriasis. In a study of 80 individuals, Aloe Vera treatment led to a greater reduction in psoriasis severity when compared to a topical steroid.

These are not surprising as Aloe Vera is known for its skin friendly properties from ages. Aloe Vera is used in many skin care products like creams, lotions, lip balm, soap and aloe gel for sunburn because of its beneficial healing and regenerative properties. It has been used topically for minor burns, sunburn, rashes, sores, herpes, athlete's foot and insect bites.

Studies show that consuming aloe in a pill or liquid form can relieve swelling and inflammation in the joints of arthritis sufferers. Also, there's scientific evidence to support the use of Aloe Vera as a laxative and in reducing dandruff when applied to the scalp.

Most people use Aloe Vera without experiencing any kind of adverse reaction. However, there is a word of caution; anyone with a known allergy to garlic, onions and other plants in the same family with Aloe Vera should avoid using it. Also, Aloe Vera shouldn't be used on severe wounds or burns. In addition, women who are pregnant or breast-feeding should avoid drinking Aloe Vera, as it may stimulate womb contractions.

## **7.0 References/Further Reading**

Awoyinfa M., and Igwe, D., (2003). *The Art of Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines*. Lagos: McDee Communications.

Okoye, I., (1998). *Feature Writing: Theory and Practice*. Lagos: Mic Pac Ventures Ltd.

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**JLS 824 - JOURNALISM PUBLICATION****MODULE 6 - ADVANCED WRITING SKILLS WORKSHOP**

- *UNIT 3 - ENHANCEMENT OF FEATURES*

**1.0 Introduction**

Throughout this Course so far, I have emphasized the use of words (in sentences, quotes and paragraphs) in the making of good journalistic publications. To make writing have more impact, journalists use a few other enhancements. This is the subject of the last Unit of this Course. By now, your writing skills should have improved tremendously. If they have not, then it is most likely that you have not been answering the self-assessment tests diligently and may be you do not even attempt the assignments. If this is the case, it is not a wasted effort for you to go back to the respective units, assimilate the key points and practise the skills taught.

**2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- Provide illustrations that make journalistic writing more meaningful.
- Demonstrate effective application of appropriate enhancements for different features/writings.

**3.0 Main Content: How to Enhance Features**

The four principal ways to enhance feature articles (and similar publications) in journalists are: 1) Pictures 2) Graphics 3) Headlines 4) Layout and Design. Traditionally all of these enhancements are not the jobs of writers (but of other professionals in the media establishment – for instance, Photo Editors, Graphic Editors and Sub-Editors handle pictures, graphics and headlines/page planning respectively. But the modern-day writer – especially the one who uses the ‘new journalism’ style - must be involved in enhancing his or her features. They are very important elements in creating meaning (communicating), the primary purpose of the features.

## PICTURES

Photographs are very important tools the feature writer cannot ignore. A good photograph *lessens the task of the writer*. No matter how skillful a writer is, there are situations in which he or she finds himself or herself being unable to describe appropriately. Photographs help the reporter to *report what he or she is not able to describe in words*. Even if the writer is able to describe the scenery in a picturesque form, having a photograph to go along with the story offers good enhancement in that it serves as *evidence* of the reality he or she is trying to conjure. Photographs *liven up* the grey pages of features. It can be very boring going through two or three pages of text without any form of illustration to brighten the eyes and senses of the reader.

It is important to note that photographs are to complement the feature article, not duplicate it. The photo is part of the text and should not be viewed or presented differently. Some writers, in fact, take their intro from the photograph:

The photograph on this page is that of Miss Lucy Pye and her boyfriend.

Lucy had accompanied her boyfriend Rooney to the Bar Beach for a weekend time-out but Rooney got drowned by sudden ocean surge, leaving him unconscious.

As he lay dying, officials of the Red Cross rushed in to save his life as TV crew from nearby Nigeria Television Authority filmed the rescue operation.

As soon as the TV crew arrived, Lucy smiled broadly, excited that she would be shown on News At Nine later in the day...

Consider the above story without any the photograph. Do you think the writer would have conveyed the same meaning as the one with photographs? The writer – even in an opinion feature – should brighten his or her articles with photographs. But the text that accompanies the photograph(s), including the caption, should not be repetitive of the photograph. For example, it is wrong to show the photograph of “Super Eagles Players” and caption it “Super Eagles Players”. Or as we often see in the Nigerian media, a story titled “The World of Crocodiles” is illustrated with a photograph of a big crocodile with the caption: “A crocodile”. Captions should tell more about the

photograph. A better way to write the foregoing caption is: “A crocodile...now the favourite meal of the rich.”

## GRAPHICS

Graphics perform almost the same functions as photographs in enhancing features. Unlike the photograph which is a shot of the actual thing or issue being featured, graphics are artistic impressions of the actual thing or issue being featured. Graphics are used when photographs are not available. They are also used even when good photographs are available *to create variety*. Sometimes, you do not have the kind of photographs that you want as a writer. For instance, you want to write a feature of how bank chief Executives are faring in detention camps pending their trials in court. You are not likely going to get that kind of photograph. But an artist can give you that ‘impression’ and that powers that feature tremendously. Exposés have been written on armed bandits with artist impressions of them according to eye witnesses. And in most cases the impressions were enough for the police and members of the public to arrest the culprits. When handled by professionals, graphics could be almost as good as photographs. Graphics also help to add to the reader’s fun in reading your feature. For instance, in writing a satire, a cartoon illustration of the subject would create more impact. Sometimes, the feature is presented in abstract form. This kind of feature cannot be suitably illustrated with a photograph. Graphics would be more appropriate. *Newswatch* pioneered this style in their Preface to Cover Story in which the cover story is preceded with a abstract thesis and a graphical illustration on the subject of the cover. Such graphics usually do not carry captions. It is for the reader to ‘interpret’ it by himself or herself.

## HEADLINES

For the feature writer, the job of writing the headline of his or her story is no longer the exclusive job of the editor or sub-editor. Even if he or she does not write the headline, the writer should accompany the feature with a headline that represents his or her intent (the feature mood). Eventually, the editor can change it. The advantage of the ‘dummy headline’ is that it gives the editor the ‘negative’ of the picture you have painted in your feature. As we pointed out in previous Units, feature writing reveals the personality of the writer. The person who writes headlines will reflect himself or herself in the headlines. But if you give the person an idea of ‘who you are’ he or she would likely not misrepresent you. Editors, rather than be annoyed with you for casting a headline for your feature, will only be delighted in you in not wasting their precious time – especially if the headline is good.

There are times the feature writer wants to suspend the reader's interest, hide the kernel of the feature until sometime later in the body. The headline for such feature must cooperate with the text. It must not reveal the secret. This is an example of how headlines and body text must be seen as a coherent whole. If a feature is written in the New Journalism style, the headline cannot take the Conventional style. Below is an illustration:

Conventional styled text: Headline: "Majek Fashek blazes trail in African reggae"

New Journalism styled text: Headline: "*I and I* rule the African *generiation*," says new reggae star, Majek Fashek.

## LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Presentation format is one key thing that stands out the feature article from other kinds of journalism publications. The manner of presentation can enhance or destroy the feature. Subject to house style, the feature should be presented to conform to the canons of page planning in order to convey the overall message of the writer – unity, harmony, coherence, attractiveness/aesthetics, grammar and spelling, etc.

### **3.1 Self-Assessment and Questions**

1. Why role do enhancements play in making good journalism publications
2. Explain the uses of photographs and graphics in feature writing.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

The journalistic writer must remember that he or she is primarily a communicator. In addition to the prose (in his or her feature) enhancements with photographs, graphics, headlines and page design and layout will make the feature more impacting. The writer must therefore have demonstrable skills not only in writing but in communicating graphically.

## **5.0 Summary**

The four principal ways to enhance feature articles (and similar publications) in journalists are: 1) Pictures 2) Graphics 3) Headlines 4) Layout and Design. Traditionally all of these enhancements are not the jobs of writers (but of other

professionals in the media establishment – for instance, Photo Editors, Graphic Editors and Sub-Editors handle pictures, graphics and headlines/page planning respectively. But the modern day writer – especially the one who uses the ‘new journalism’ style must be involved in enhancing his or her features.

## 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

a)

1. Write a feature that can be illustrated with the following photograph



2. Write headlines (of story) and captions (of photographs) for the following photographs:







b) Study 10 features in any national daily of your choice and write a critique of the captions.

(c) How would you illustrate the features you wrote in Module 5 Unit 3 with

*(a) Photographs?*

*(b) Graphics?*

*Provide the necessary photograph(s) and/or graphic(s) and explain your choice(s).*

## 7. References/Further Reading

Awoyinfa M., and Igwe, D., (2003). *The Art of Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines*. Lagos: McDee Communications.

Evans, Harold (1989). *Pictures on a Page*. London: Macmillan

Okoye, I., (1998). *Feature Writing: Theory and Practice*. Lagos: Mic Pac Ventures Ltd.

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