

READERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE READABILITY OF
THE SPORTS NEWS WRITING OF THE ETHIOPIAN
SPORTS NEWSPAPERS

BY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION OF
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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate readers' viewpoints on the readability of the sports news stories reporting of the local sport newspapers. The researcher was interested in working on this area for he repeatedly observed that some readers claimed that the sport news stories were difficult to read easily and comprehend efficiently.

The central point of this study is readability. There have been debates and different viewpoints among scholars on the concept of readability; factors that determine readability of a text, and the tools used to measure to detect text difficulty. It is important to note that the theoretical perspectives presented are partially at odd with the view that factors attribute to readability are still arguable. Some scholars would disagree with the argument that linguistic factors can contribute to readability. This study, however, focused only on the linguistic variables for readers' viewpoints mainly focused on this area. In all, the participants provided five problem areas that accounted for the news stories difficulty of easy reading and efficient understanding. These include: news stories language usage, structure difficulties and omission of required information and/or details; messed up news contents structure, and incoherent news contents organization.

In order to study readers' viewpoints, the researcher, based on the readers' viewpoints, stated the assumption that the news stories reporting were not readable due to some linguistic barriers or may be otherwise. To this end, the researcher used the qualitative research approach because some factors of readability of news text are subject to individual readers. According to some scholars, these factors are difficult to trace using quantification methods. For example, news structuring and organization and understanding of a news text cannot be measured statistically. Besides, as stated in the literature review, the processes of reading and understanding of a text are often complex, inconsistent and inclusive. It seemed appropriate to see them in the readers' perspectives. Thus, semi-structured and focus group discussion techniques were used to collect data.

Generally, as it was hypothesized, the narrative data showed that the states of the readability of the news stories were found to be difficult to read and understand easily and efficiently by all the general readers due to the linguistic factors predicted in the hypotheses, though it was at different levels. This might be for the stories were not reported in clear, precise, simple, telling, coherent, emotion enticing and forthcoming writing, and strong and grabbing news stories narration and organization. Besides, the results showed that readability is subject to various non-linguistic variables, such as readers' prior semantic and syntactic knowledge and purposes of reading though exhaustive investigations were not made on these issues. So, results confirmed that there was a positive relation between the hypotheses and the results.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

This study was launched to investigate readers' viewpoints or perception on the readability of the local sport news writing. So, the central point of this study is readability. This is about whether readers were able to read the news stories rapidly and comprehend the contents efficiently (Dale and Chall, 1949; cited in DuBay, 2004:3).

The topic of this study emerged when the researcher frequently heard some readers, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, complaining about and criticizing the writing of the news of the local sports newspapers. These readers indicated that the writing of the news stories was difficult to read them quickly and understand/comprehend their meanings. They mentioned some influencing factors related mainly to linguistic variables. Their particular claims focused on problems in the news language structure and usage, that is, vocabulary and sentence difficulties; illogical news formatting and incoherent organization of the news stories. Based on their views, it may be possible to understand that the news stories they read were challenging to read and comprehend; that is to say, they were not readable due to these linguistic variables.

These observations prompted the researcher an inquiry into the states of the news stories writing. So, he was interested to work on this area and investigate readers' viewpoints further. Therefore, in order to study the problem further, the researcher has established the assumption that the language structure and usage of the news writing; structure and organization of the news contents were difficult, for readers of different backgrounds, to read. Concerning these factors, Fry and Sigman, 1984 (cited in Stone, 1984:1) indicate that readability researches have found out that the language usage and structure, and formatting and organization of news stories (among other factors) have impacts on readers' easy reading and understanding of the depicted story.

There have been different perceptions on what of the readability. The existing definitions are based on the factors that have potential influences on readability. So, in general, it may be possible to understand it as it is about "what makes a text easier or difficult to read and comprehend" (DuBay, 2004:3). What are these factors? There have been controversies on the factors that can affect readability. In this regard, readability studies show that there are various linguistic and non-linguistic variables that may make text reading difficult (DuBay, 2004:28). Some of these factors are presented in some details in chapter two

The debate is not only on what influencing factors but also on the tools used to detect text difficulty. Since there are different theoretical backgrounds in testing readability of a text, obviously, there have been different viewpoints on the tools that are used to predict/test difficulty of reading.

There are those who view that difficulty of readability can be tested objectively by employing statistical measures/ formulas. Fry, 1986 (cited in DuBay, 2004:53) points out that ‘articles on readability formulas are among the most frequently cited articles. The applications give researchers an objective means of controlling the difficulties of passages.’ He also states that readability formulas give researchers an objective means of controlling the difficulty of passages. In spite of the complaints about the limitations that the formulas have, the formulas have been in extensive application for years. Today, according to DuBay (2004:56), the formulas are more popular than ever with their credentials and limitations remaining intact. DuBay (2004:56) also indicates that the formulas are widely used in journalism.

In contrast to the above view, there are others who argue that reading and thereby comprehension is a complex process to detect it objectively (Crowder and Wanger,1992:124).In this point of view, cognitive theorists argue that reading is an act of thinking and hence difficult to test some of its aspects objectively. For example, Dubay (2004:28) writes: “The difficulty arises from the complexity of reading comprehension and the means we have to test it, which is of indirect. Researchers, for example, are not sure exactly what exactly the reading tests are telling them. Do they reveal comprehension of the text or other artifacts such as prior knowledge, memory or the difficulty of questions?” So, according to them, it is difficult to detect some factors that may have effects on readability and cannot be measured by readability formulas. They claim that readability measures have limitations to detect some subjective aspects of reading difficulty. For example, Gray and Leary, 1935(cited in Dubay, 204:16) have found out that they could not measure factors, such as contents, format, or organization statistically. Hence, these factors should be tested by subjective leveling (DuBay, 2004:16) On the other hand, there are others who argue that the formulas are valid with all their limitations but should be used along with the subjective leveling (Klare, 1963 and Fry, 2002; cited in DuBay, 2004:35, and Chall, et al., 1996:21).

Readability researchers have long been debating on the validity of readability formulas. The formulas have become center of controversies, especially, after the raise of the ‘plain language movement’ in the 1960s (DuBay, 2004:15). Critics of the formulas claim that the formulas do not test comprehensibility. The argument is that the formulas use only the surface features of a text and ignore features like content and organization (Duffy and Kabance, 1981; Duffy, 1985; cited in Dubay, 2004:15, and Gray and Leary, 1935, cited in DuBay, 2004:10, and Kervin, 1997:17). Kintsch, 1979 (cited in Dubay, 2004:53) also adds: “Readability formulas do not base on the modern linguistic theory and over looked the interaction between the reader and the text.” Regarding the limitations of the formulas, Gebremedhin (1993:87) puts: “It might be remarked that readability formulae mostly detach a text from its readership and its context-thus, denying its potential for meaning.” He further states that these formulae disregard reader variables, such as background knowledge and heterogeneity of readers. On the other hand, the subjective measures are criticized for they cannot measure text difficulties in concrete. DuBay (2004:3) indicates that the subjective tests cannot do what the formulas do, that is, they do not provide objective prediction of text difficulty (DuBay, 2004:3).

In addressing these issues, the researcher has explored the subject of the study on the insiders’ viewpoints or perspectives. The researcher has chosen this approach for, as Bryman (2004:279) states, the social world must be interpreted from the perspective of the people being studied. Thus, this method has enabled the researcher to have a face-to- face interaction with participants of the study and obtain their views. In addition, this strategy helped the researcher to probe beneath the surface appearances of the linguistic aspects of the news writing of the local sports newspapers (Bryman, 2004:280). Besides, some of the aspects of the study that the readers mention, such as news formatting and coherence organization of news contents, some aspects of word difficulty and language structure, cannot be detected by objective measures (Klare,1980;Gunning,1952; Dale,1967 and Fry,1988; cited in DuBay,2004:19, and Gilliland,1972:32). Chapter three presents in some more detail why this methodology was preferred.

The researcher is aware that readability studies have been done mainly on English and other European languages texts (Rabin, 1988:56). However, the researcher does not have available evidence whether or not the tests, particularly readability formulas, are applicable for Amharic Language. He e-mailed to William DuBay who currently works as a readability consultant to check whether the readability theories and the formulas are applicable to other languages like Amharic, but he didn’t get any

response despite repeated attempt. However, regarding to the formulas, DuBay (2004:1) confirms: “Over 80 years research and testing have contributed to the worldwide use in many languages of the readability the formulas. They help us improve the text on the level of word and sentence, the first cause of readability.”

Therefore, this paper is devoted to some of the linguistic elements that attribute to reading difficulty. This is because, as mentioned above, the researcher witnessed that the readers’ critic mainly focused on the linguistic variables. According to readers’ comments, readers need a news text that is interesting, quickly read, and easily understood/comprehended. This, on the other hand, demands a well-written news story (LaRocque, 2003:8). Good news writing depends on the writing style and the way its parts are organized in coherence. Hicks, et al, (1999:3) also point out that readers need news reporting to be clear, simply and logically organized and thereby easy to understand. This is because, as Timothy (1994:2) notes: “A well-written news text simplifies and facilitates comprehension and engages readers in reading it.” In order to produce such piece, journalists need to bother about whether their publications are well -written.

Readability researches indicate that many people find news writing difficult to read due to incorrect language structure and usage, unclear and non-conventional news stories structuring and incoherent organization. These are, among others, some of the factors linked to difficulty of readability (Fry and Sigman, cited in Stone, 1984:1).

It may be a wide spread fact that readers can be obscured or shocked by bad, unclear, slavish and illogical writing and organization. News writers should, therefore, take due cares about the use of language so as to transmit news to mass audience as efficiently as possible. The standard of the language used must be high (Pape and Featherstone, 2005:26). In this regard, Kervin (1997:46) states: “The writer’s ability to use language in order to communicate information simply and accurately is a key aspect to succeed as a journalist.” Similarly, if the journalist wants his/her report to flow, the piece needs to be easy to read, simple and logical. To achieve this: “The writer needs to make sure that there is no clumsiness or careless construction of words and sentences” (Kervin, 1997:7). Similarly, Hohenberg (1973:8) in his part states: “Writers, whose work is clear, simply organized, and easy to understand is more likely to find an audience in today’s world”.

In sum, readability studies and theories have underlined that easy readability of news stories always remains crucial and at the front and center of news writing. This is because, Aronson, et al, (1996:1) explains, 'readers' ability to quickly read and comprehend a text is the utmost concern to the present journalism.' As it is mentioned above, the subject of the study is readers' viewpoints on the readability of sport news reporting. It may be possible to observe that sports have attracted more and more audiences and media coverage, especially television. This in turn has created competition among the media. So, there may not be any doubt that sports journalists need to be more serious in their writing than before to compete with television. Thus, being able to write in such a way is the most obvious asset for sports writing (Kervin ,1997:5).

Therefore, it may be an overt fact that sport has become a concern and source of economy, brotherhood relationships among peoples, interest, wisdom, peace making, participation, entertainment and others for its audiences and beneficiaries. So, it may not be strange that people want to read and know about sports matters. In this regard, Kervin (1997:55) witness: "People elsewhere want to read about sports at leisure and at their own pace about their chosen sports." Thus, writers should know that their readers might not have been to or seen the sport event that they are writing about. Therefore, it is essential to let the readers know what happened in the event." So, the writer should make sure that the reader gets the glimpse into what the atmosphere at the event was like. This is achieved showing the actual life and adding some colour to the piece (Kervin, 1997:551).

To come to the concern of this study-the local sport newspapers, in Ethiopia, about 71 years passed since the newspaper industry began, and passed some changes and upheavals. Sports news writing began in 1926 on the first government newspaper called "Aemro". Since then sports news has been reported on the subsequent government newspapers (Commission for Physical Training and Sports, 1985:10).

In Ethiopia, the growth of printing press and technology have credited with much of the development newspapers and increased newspaper readers. More importantly, the beginning of sports news reporting on radio and television is believed to attract more and more people to listen and watch. Besides, access to watch sports events live on the satellite is another means, which attributes to the ever-increasing sports audiences.

Viewed overall, it is believed that the media have been playing a profound effect in promoting sports and attracting people interest an involvement to the extent of continued concern about it. For one or another reason, sports newspapers have been wanted and read widely in Ethiopia.

Some people who recognized that people are in high need for sports newspapers were inspired to establish their private commercial newspapers. Private commercial newspapers born and grew in number after the government change happened in 1992. The proclamation of the Press Law of the 1992 has marked a new era for the emergence and proliferation of a number of private newspapers. Before 1992, the print media and printing press were owned and regulated by only the then governments.

According to the information obtained from the Ministry of Information, the first private sport newspaper called 'Champion' was published right after the Ethiopian Press Law in 1992. It was also learned that four newspapers were registered during this year. But some of them disappeared. Though there was no study carried out, it is assumed that the notable reasons for their cease were their failure to attract readers like the political newspapers that were reporting the political affairs existed during that time, which were able to draw many readers.

Today, the local newspapers published vary. There are daily government and weekly private, some regional sates and political party's newspapers. According to the information obtained from the Ministry of Information, the government, private and organization newspapers were general, sports, medicine, business, law, religion, bid and love. The government newspapers, the Addis Zemen and the Ethiopian Herald, were widely distributed in the entire country. The weekly commercial private newspapers circulated mainly in Addis Ababa and in some big and small metropolitan areas nearby Addis Ababa.

Above all, the researcher witnessed that the most pronounced increase in the number of private newspapers and their circulation had happened in 2005. During this time, the May 2005 Ethiopian Election was taking place. What was happening each day drew people's attention to know by reading the private newspapers since there had not yet been private broadcast media in the Nation.

The heated political debate and election campaign between the ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, and the opposition political parties and thereby of the political tension sparked increased the circulation of the existed newspapers and the appearance of more

newspapers. The main focus of many of the newspapers was the national political situation at that time. Even the business and sports newspapers were reporting the political dispute.

At that time, the researcher noted that there were 26 newspapers mainly political-focused private commercial newspapers excluding others. They constituted about 88% of the over-all weekly private newspapers.

The controversial political condition had happened following the election result. Unfortunately, the worsening political situation became the cause for the cease of the twenty major newspapers, which constituted more than 72% of the total private commercial newspapers. Pressures associated with the political crises in the Nation following the election had put those newspapers out of business. Some editors were charged and imprisoned in connection with the post election violence and some of those newspapers were banned by court decision. Some readers say that they have to read sports newspapers during their leisure time after their favorite political newspapers were banned. They also indicate that reading sports newspapers is their least option. Some editors and publishers also said that the cease of those newspapers helped them to get back their readers and other more new newsreaders.

What is perhaps clear is that after the disappearance of those newspapers, the sports newspapers enjoyed the most noticed weekly circulation. In addition, the cease of those newspapers also attributed to the emergence of other new four sports newspapers. Until those newspapers stopped publishing, there were only four sports newspapers (Ministry of Information, 2007). However, their number increased by more than double since then. During the time of this study, there were ten weekly sports newspapers that were reporting local and mainly international sports news. All were published in Addis Ababa.

Whatever the reason behind, today, quite often, it is a commonplace to observe more people reading or holding sports newspapers than others. Some newspapers sellers in Addis Ababa confirm that they have more sports newspaper buyers than others.

Thus, it may be possible to see that the private sport newspapers in Ethiopia have become a big business. According to some publishers of the newspapers studied, their circulation and profits have been going up. They have turned to automation circulation to generate money. These newspapers

published totally about 131,300 copies a week (Ministry of Information). What all these mean in practice is that sports newspapers had more readers than others and continue highly sought.

The list of the sport newspapers that were published during the study is presented in the following table. The list includes only those commercial newspapers. The information was obtained from the Ministry of Information in November 2007. The list order is put according to their time of establishment of the newspapers.

	Names of the newspapers	Year of establishment	Copies per week
1	World Sport	1994	20,000
2	Enter Sport	1994	18,800
3	League	2002	8,300
4	Ethio Sport	2002	31,000
5	Attena	2002	10,000
6	Hatrik	2004	15,000
7	Top Sport	2007	4,000
8	ABBI Sport	2007	8,000
9	The gunners	2007	12,000
10	Challenge	2007	5,000

Nonetheless, most talk about the writing quality of these newspapers during those days had been a little stiff. The researcher consciously tried to talk some readers. Those readers expressed their dissatisfaction with the poor quality of the writing of the sports newspapers. The readers also indicated that the entire sports newspapers had common writing problems.

The condemnation and the concern of newsreaders about the sports news writing might reveal that the news stories had readability difficulty. Despite there were readers' claims, these newspapers rarely strive to employ their competitive energies to produce well-written news stories so as to meet readers' needs.

According to readers' suggestion, these newspapers existed with their poor news writing due to one is not much better than others. This may result absence of competition among them. Absence of competition among the sports newspapers is maintained through their joint operating agreement. Each newspaper, except the four, which appear on Wednesday and Saturday were subscribed on a separate day, is published in different days to avoid competition. This may indicate that these newspapers were not yet faced with the task of maintaining their readers and attracting news ones. These newspapers seemed to care more about profit than they did about their readers. In fact, these newspapers' economic fortune looked good.

Clearly, at this point in time, what can reasonably discern from the readers' complaints is that there has existed an unquenched readers' appetite for robust writing that newspapers had not yet addressed to satisfy readers' needs. That is, the news stories writing had potential influences on the readers' easy reading and understanding of the news stories they read.

Once the researcher had identified the nature of the research questions or areas of inquiry, he selected settings where he could find and observe sport newspapers readers with sufficient frequency to make his observation worthwhile.

To this effect, the researcher has found necessary to use observation for it is useful for collecting data and generating hypothesis (Wimmer and Dominic, 2006:122). Besides, it is a method that is applied in qualitative research based on hearing, watching, feeling and smelling are integrated (Flick, 2005:135). With this in mind, the observation method was used to:

a/ get preliminary information. Thus, as Flick (2005:134) explains, the researcher could identify who continuously read sports newspapers, the natural setting where they read and how they reading. Concerning this, Wimmer and Dominic (2006:122) state: "Field observation often makes excellent pilot studies because they identify important variables and provide useful preliminary information." Thus, in order to identify who sports newspapers readers were, how and where they read, the researcher should have found those readers frequently to observe them for sometimes and conducted semi-structured interview.

In order to accomplish these objectives, the researcher traveled through some parts of Addis Ababa and visited some areas and public places. This include libraries, sports fields, café's, `Chat` chewing

houses,('chat' is a green plant whose leaf is chewed as a stimulant) private shops, and some work places during March to August 2007. Three people whom the researcher knew told him that he could get sport newspaper readers at 'chat' chewing houses. They took the researcher to three 'chat' chewing houses and facilitated him to conduct semi-structured interview and focus group discussions. The researcher visited those places repeatedly, each place in the selected cities at least ten times staying there from an hour and so. This was done to select some places among others that were convenient for further observation and to select those who could take part in the interview and focus group discussion.

b/ define background information necessary to frame a hypothesis to be investigated in the study. The researcher noted that some of those people observed were reading the newspapers with less attention and interest. They were rambling. Some of them were talking to each other commenting some problems of the news writing that, according to them, affected their reading. The researcher also asked some readers' perception on the readability of the news writing of the newspapers they read. This was done at this stage of the study to get some insights on the factors that made readers' reading difficult. So, the data obtained by technique were not included in the result.

After getting preliminary information, the researcher had a cursory look at some news stories of the sports newspapers readers were complaining about. The researcher could see some proofs for the readers complaints. As those readers indicated, the stories were written in hackneyed reporting that as a result might have decreased readers reading ease.

Observation of preliminary data collection was done during May-July, 2007. Having done this, the researcher was able to continue collecting data using the semi-structured interview and focus group discussion.

In order to check whether or not researches have been done on the same subject, the researcher had attempted to trace bibliographic sources that may keep track of studies done before. However, the researcher couldn't find any local research made on the subject of this study as far as his knowledge is concerned.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The impact of language structure and usage (word and sentence structure and usage); headline writing, and structuring and coherent organization of news information have been subjects of news writing theories and readability researches. Previous readability researches conducted abroad suggest that what languages and how the reporters used them; how they write headlines; how they structured and organized the news information have either positive or negative relation with readers' easy or difficult reading and understanding of news stories they read. However, the theories developed and the researches made on these aspects of news writing had been in USA and European backgrounds or basis. Thus, the available theories have to be tested in the Amharic newspapers readers' perspectives.

Considering readability theories and researches, the study mainly focuses on the following major hypothesis. It is stated that sports newsreaders' easy reading and efficient comprehension of the texts can be determined by the relationship between the readers' backgrounds and how the language is structured and used, and how the news information is structured, sufficiently detailed and coherently organized.

As it is mentioned above, readers express that the news stories were difficult to read and comprehend for some of the factors they indicate. Besides, the newspaper readers expressed their dissatisfaction with the writing of the news stories they read. Thus, based on readers' criticism, the underling assumption here is that readers found the news stories difficult to read and comprehend because of some linguistic factors and readers' different backgrounds. There might have been language structure and usage constraints at word and sentence levels; the news parts might not have been structured in order of their significance and lacked necessary information and details, and there might have been contents that either unrelated to the topics of the news or incoherently organized.

As Porter (2005:2) put it the underline premise is that news stories are more readable if they are reported in clear, precise, telling, coherent, emotion enticing and forthcoming writing, and strong and grabbing narration.

Based on these assumptions, the researcher has proposed the following hypotheses: it is expected that the reporters:

1. used words that were unfamiliar, ungrammatical or incorrect, unnecessary and inappropriate that might made readability difficult to readers of different backgrounds.
2. used sentences that were too long or short, ungrammatical, unrelated and unnecessary that might made readability difficult to readers of different backgrounds.
3. arranged news stories not according to their order of importance, and lacked necessary and/or detailed information for the stories that might make readability difficult to readers of different backgrounds.
4. incoherently organize the news parts/contents that might made readability difficult to readers of different backgrounds.

On these bases, the following four research questions that emerge from the general literature on readability of news writing are examined. Sub-questions that are raised in the literature are also set in part three to elaborate upon the questions.

1. Did the sports news stories reporting have difficulties in word and sentence usage and structure that might affect readers' easy of reading and efficiently comprehended the news stories?
2. Did the structures of the news stories affect readers' easy reading and efficient comprehend of the news stories?
3. Did the stories have necessary and/or detailed information that enabled the readers understands the stories?
4. Did organization of the news stories affected readers' easy reading and efficiently comprehend of the news stories?

Thus, on the bases of these research questions, the study attempted to explore some readers' view points/perceptions of the readability of the news texts they read. The researcher assumed that investigating the extent of ease of readability of news writing of sports news on the bases of readers' perception or view points has a significant importance for the betterment of news writing of the sports newspapers.

1.3. Significance of the Study

News text readability studies have been undertaken to identify factors that affect readers' ease of reading. As DuBay (2004:56) indicates, the readability researches such as this can have a paramount relevance to inform those who are involved in newspaper works how their readers view their news reporting and thereby learn the factors that might challenge their readers' rapid reading and efficient comprehension of the news stories. Furthermore, the study of subjective meanings and everyday experience and practice is as essential as the contemplation of the narratives and discourses. Therefore, studying the extent of the local sports news texts readability based on readers' reaction towards the news stories may help both the news writers/ publishers to know what textual elements affected the readability of their news stories. To this end, the researcher will present his research results to the writers of the news stories understudy on a workshop that his Ministry where he works will organize for this purpose.

Similarly, this study is also important to determine how the characteristics of language usage, structure and organization of news information influenced readers' easy reading and understanding of the Amharic language sports newspapers. Moreover, it may provide valuable insights into the impacts of specific characteristics of subjects of the study on the Amharic sport news stories readers. In addition, the exploratory study offers some first cut findings from which to build future studies. That is to say, it may be used as an initial point for subsequent and in depth studies.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how readers view the readability of the local Amharic sports news stories reporting. In line with this purpose, the study is conducted to examine whether the word, sentence structure and usage, structuring and organization of contents of the news stories affected some readers' easy reading and understanding.

1.5. Scope of the Study

The study is limited to investigate the readability of the writing style of some news stories of the ten local private sports newspapers with particular reference to readers' viewpoints. One-month (August,

2007) issues were taken. The study has focused only on the hard news since the researcher observed that readers' criticism was mainly on the linguistic aspect of hard news writing. Thus, August's news issues are selected for it was during this month that the researcher was ready to collect the data after he had finished the prior parts of the study. However other previous and following month's issues are also taken for those newspapers that didn't produce hard news during August. This is because there were some newspapers that were reporting only feature stories during this time.

1.6. Organization of the Study

The complete work of the study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction that discusses background, statement, objective, significance, scope and organization of the study; chapter two presents literature review; chapter three discusses research methodology and data analysis of the study; chapter four presents data and interprets the findings, and chapter five presents conclusions.

1.7. Limitation of the Study

The study has limitations in that only one method (qualitative) is used. This is because, as it was stated above and later in the following chapter, reading is a complex matter on which there are different perceptions on the factors that affect efficient reading and the tools used to determine text readability. So, other approaches should have been used to support or disprove the results of the method used. In addition, since the aim of the study was to investigate readers' viewpoints on the readability of the sports news stories writing style, the researcher did not made further studies on the non-linguistic variables, such as readers' purpose of reading, prior syntactic and semantic knowledge. Some readers' responses indicated that these issues contributed to difficulties of the readability of the news stories. So, the researcher feels that in depth investigation should be conducted to check the extent of the influence these factors had on readability ease. The researcher could not do these for he had time and financial problems.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. Introduction

As it is stated above, this study intends to investigate readers' viewpoints or perceptions on the extent of the readability of the local sports news reporting. Thus, this part of the study is devoted to the explanation of theoretical contentions on readability. Some of the factors that are related to reading and comprehension are presented. These include news writing language (word and sentence difficulty), stories structure and coherent content organizations.

2.1. Readability

Perhaps the basic and clearest statement of the assumption of news writing is its readability. Readability of news text is essential because readers need news information presented in a well-written way—easy information communication. Otherwise, readers' satisfaction will plummet of news stories, which are difficult to read. So, it is assumed that engaging readers by producing readable news text is the business of newspapers writers and editors. This is because readers need writing that facilitates and simplifies ease of reading. Klare, 1963 (cited in DuBay, 2004:26) indicates that poor qualities of news writing prevent quick and easy reading and comprehension. Hence, it has been a conventional journalistic job to make a news text readable since readability is the prime concern and measure of successful writing (Kervin, 1997:46).

One of the points worth mentioning here is 'how do we know the extent of the readability of a text or otherwise?' According to the readability theories, readability is measured by the extent to which readers are able to read at optimal speed and find interesting and efficiently understand news stories (Dale and Chall, 1949 (cited in Dubay, 2004:3). However, there have been debates on the factors involved in reading and determined the level text readability.

It has been indicated that the essence of silent reading is a complex process in which readers involve their varies series of skills (Crowder and Winger, 1992:17 and Broughton, et al, 1980:89-90). Broughton, et al, (1980:94) explain that readers involve their ability to recognize shapes of letters (figures on the ground curves, lines and dots in patterned relationships), and their similarity and

difference; to correlate the black marks on the paper-correlating the patterned shapes with the formal elements of the language, and to employ their further intellectual ability to correlate the result with the meanings which those words symbolize.

Different scholars define readability differently. For example, according to Klare, 1963 (cited in Dubay, 2004:3), readability is “about ease of understanding a text due to the writing style. For Hargis, 1998 (cited in Dubay, 2004:3), it is: “ease of reading words and sentences.” Whereas, Mclaughlin, 1969 (cited in DuBay, 2004:3) defines readability as: “The degree to which a given class of people find certain reading matter compelling- and comprehensible.” Dale and Chall, 1949 (cited in DuBay; 2004:3) define it as: “The total of all those elements within a given piece printed material that affect the success of a group of readers have with it. The success is the extent to which they understand it, read it at an optimal speed, and find it interesting.” Generally, it may possible to infer that readability is an aspect of “the effective communication of information through its pervasiveness in its writing qualities, such as writing clarity, style,” (DuBay, 2004:56).

As it may be possible to understand in the given definitions above, the central point that the definitions raise in common is the background in reading and the linguistic factors that affect ease of reading. For example, Klare’s definition focuses on the writing style (ease of readability of word and sentence structure). Mclaughlin’s definition stresses the relation between the text and reader’s prior knowledge, reading skill, interest and motivation. And clarity of writing is what is important in Hargis definition (DuBay, 2004:3). Thus, readability experts have long been engaged in identifying different elements that have potential influences on the ease of reading. Their studies, in general, found out that there are linguistic and non- linguistic factors that have relations to text readability (DuBay, 2004:3-35).

The studies explore that the extra linguistic factors, such as reader’s reading ability, prior (background knowledge and experience (the extent of the familiarity of the content with the readers.), readers’ purpose of reading, and interest and motivation are powerful contributors to text readability (Pearson, et al, 1979; cited in Dubay, 2004:27; Gates, 1930:24, and Zeller, 1941:34). Aronson K., et al, (1996:2) also state that readability should be viewed as an interaction between a text and readers’ cognitive aptitudes. They further said: “Predicting reading and understanding requires consideration of the readers’ knowledge, language skills, and other cognitive aptitudes.” (Aronson, K. et al, 1996:4)

Similarly, Woern, 1977 (cited in Dubay, 2004:29) explains “reader’s prior knowledge and beliefs about the world affect reading comprehension significantly.” Adding to this, Entin and Klare, 1985 (cited in Impact of Information Plain- Language Service, 2004:2) confirm in their study “prior knowledge, interest and motivation of a reader has relation to comprehension.” Adding to this, Aronson, et al, (1996:2) explain: “Easier readability of a text has more benefits for those of less knowledge about the subject than those of more. Advanced knowledge of a subject can ‘drown out’ the effects of an otherwise difficult text.” They discovered “The Lower the reading skill prior Knowledge, interest or motivation, the more important is the readability of the text. Readers of a low reading level, low prior knowledge, or low interest and motivation will be more apt to read a text if it is easy to-read.” They also add “high interest and motivation can enable readers to compensate for poor reading skill. Highly motivated readers can often manage to master even difficult texts.” What are stated above underline readers’ contribution to readability. Therefore, it is vital to adjust a text to match it with the reading ability of the readers and their prior knowledge, interests and motivations.

Goodman, 1976 (cited in Gebremedhin, 1993:71) on the other hand, argues that “reading is not primarily a decoding process-picking up information from the page in a letter-by-letter, word-by-word manner, but it was rather a selective process, or a psycholinguist knowledge they bring to the reading situation and then proceed by predicting information, sampling the text and confirming the predication.” Goodman also adds “reading is an active process whereby the reader makes guess using his/her background knowledge and confirms these by employing as few clues as possible from the print.” He further elaborates, “Reading is a psycholinguistic game which entails the partial use of available minimal language cues selected from perceptual input on the bases of reader’s expectations. As this partial information is processed, tentative decisions are made to confirm, rejected or refined as reading progresses. It involves an interaction between thought and language.” He contends that “Efficient reading doesn’t resort from precise perception and identification of all elements, but from skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guess which are right the first time.” Therefore, according to him, what is important is reader’s ability to anticipate. According to Anderson, 1978 (cited in Gebremedhin, 1993:71), this model of the reading process in which a reader samples a text and makes predictions are made on the basis of “the reader’s prior syntactic and semantic knowledge is styled as” a top-down concept driven models.” DuBay (2004:31) also writes “the cognitive theorists and linguists promoted the idea of reading is largely an act of thinking.”

He further indicates that they promote that “meaning is not in the words in the passage. The reader constructs meaning by making inferences and interpretations.” In addition, they, according to DuBay (2004:32) also promote: “Information is stored in long-term memory in organized “knowledge structure.”

On the other hand, Broughton, et al,(1980: 93 and 96)state that the extent of to which the familiarity of the content of the reading material to the readers is another factor for high level of reading skill and comprehension. They (1980:92) also discuss that readers’ purposes reading have significant influences in readability. According to them people read to survey a material to skim particular item of information; to gain superficial comprehension, such as to entertain oneself; (These purposes of reading are in group called extensive reading.) and to study a content in detail, or to study the language in which the text is written. (These purposes of reading are called intensive reading.)

In extensive reading, ‘there is a possibility of low-degree of understanding for the readers are not concerned with the actual skills involved, but the effects which the employment of those skills produces. Whereas in intensive readers are mostly interested in and concerned with a deep and thorough understanding of the black marks on the paper and detailed comprehension of the text. Newspaper readers may fall between these two categories (Broughton, et al, 1980:92)

In contrast to the above theoretical approach (non-linguistic), there is also a view that reading is related to the linguistic competence of a reader. For example, Fries, 1945 and Lado, 1964 (cited in Gebremedhin, 1993:71), and Rivers, (1968:19) indicate that “the structuralism behaviorists emphasize that oral language skills and the decoding of sound-symbol relationship was taken as pivotal to pronunciation and reading proficiency.” In this view, some researchers feel that reading is subject to the linguistic competence of a reader. Similarly, Grabe (cited in Gebremedhin, 1993:36) in arguing against the top–down concept, says: “We typically do not guess or sample texts, nor is reading an approximate skill, rather reading is a very precise and very rapid skill...The reason readers are so fast is not be cause they guess well but because they can identify the vast majority of words automatically. ” This model of reading process is leveled as bottom-up approach). Samuels and Kamil, 1988 (cited in Gebremedhin, 1993:70) state that a bottom-up model starts with the printed stimuli and work their way up to the higher level and work.

On the other hand, there is another 3rd theory of reading process. This type of reading process is perceived as 'interactive scheme theoretic model.' Researchers in this theory pursue that there are readers who utilize their linguistic competence, predictions and knowledge/conceptual abilities (Grabe,cited in Gebremedhin,1993:13.). According to this theory, Overemphasizing on reader's contribution to reading without paying attention to linguistic constraints is unarguable. Gebremedlin (1993:68) and Coady, 1979 (cited in Gebremedhin, 1993:68) conceive that reading consists process strategies/linguistic threshold) which is employed by beginning readers and conceptual abilities and background knowledge, by which skilled readers are characterized.

There is also another viewpoint that argues that text difficulty or accessibility and comprehension are interrelated (Gebremedihin, 1993:83). In this regard, Anderson, 1978 (cited in Gebremedhin, 1993:3) confirming this view states:" Readability or reading difficulty of a passage and reader's comprehension of a passage are two ways of looking at the same event. If there is a close correspondence between the decoders (the writer) and encoder's (the reader) system of 'language habits'', then the passage or message is easy to comprehend. If there is not, comprehension is difficult." On the other hand, Gebremedhin, (1993:83) stresses that "encoder decoder correspondence should be envisaged not only on the systematic constraints but also on schematic (all the various assumptions embedded in a text) aspects as well." Thus, it is viewed by behaviorists that reading demands writers to produce simplified texts by facilitating the language of the text (Gebremedhin, 1993:83). Similarly, Waple's and Tyler (193:15) in their study show that "reading of many people is limited because the lack of suitable materials to their level of reading ability. The reading materials in which they are interested in are too difficult."

Another point of discussion is the impact of reader's motivation and having time on readability. In this regard, DuBay, (2004:16) indicates that readers can read and comprehend difficult reading text as long as they have enough time and the desire to read it. He notes: "People with enough motivation and time could read difficult material" However, he mentions that experience showed that most people do not do that.

To relate the issue of readability to this study, sport newspaper readers claim that the news they read were difficult to read and comprehend. Concerning this, the researcher attempted to note reader's areas

of complaints/critics. Those whom he listened during his pilot study (observation) were emphatically raised the linguistic aspects of the new writing.

But, it has been noted that the explanation of the nature of the reading process is a complex matter to explain fully and uniformly (Crowder and Winger, 1992:17). This, as a result, makes the available research evidence to be inclusive. So, it is difficult which one to give prominence to—the linguistic or the non-linguistic variables (Gebremedhin, 1993:66).

This then is a brief exploration of the nature of reading and readability, and the factors that enter into them. On the other hand, as it is stated in chapter one, this chapter presents only some of the linguistic factors that has to do with the study. This is because it is these factors that the readers commonly raise as influencing factors. These include language structure (word and sentence), headline writing, and news format and coherent organization of news parts. Thus, these issues are presented briefly as follows in turn:

2.2. Some Linguistic Factors that Affect Readability

2.2.1. Language Structure and Usage in News writing

In discussing the complex nature of the reading skill, it was pointed out that reading involves correlating elements of language with meaning. The assumption is that language structure and usage appear to affect understanding of a news text (DuBay, 2004:28) In line with this, McAdams (cited in Izard, 1993:50-51) notes: “The grammatical language usage within the stories may ease and motivate readability or make otherwise.” Similarly, Fry and Sigma, 1984 (cited in Stone, 1984:4) add that “the structuring of the language and the grammatical use in news texts as a whole have impact and regulates readers’ easy reading understanding.” The idea is that language is one influential factor in news writing. For example, Porter (2005:2) states that ‘many newspapers stories are too hard to read and understand because of clunky, jargon-rich writing; being boring; having too little information due to under-reporting and lack of context; the language being too sophisticated, and sentence complication.’

In relation to language usage as an influencing factor, McKane (2006: vii) and Stapler, (1993:12) states: “incorrect, inappropriate, and unclear language usage risks the whole news-writing job.” These

sheer qualities of errors may shock or annoy readers who can read them no matter how the news stories may be interesting. LaRocque (2003:13) notes how correct language usage matters as follow:

If language is not correct, then what is said is not meant, Then what ought to be done remains undone, if this remains undone, the morals and art deteriorate, just will go astray; if justice goes astray, the people will stand about in helpless confusions. Hence, there must be no arbitrating rinses in what is paid. This matters everything.

In line with the above literature, the Associated Press (2000:4) indicates that writers must use a language that is commonly used and understood by all common readers. This means news stories should be written in plain, simple, correct and standard language attuned to readers' lives and every day experience. Hart (1999:2) indicates: "some people turn away from newspapers because they consider them dense, irrelevant, boring, and written in technical in often confusing language of experts." Broughton et al., (1980:94-5) add: "The efficient reader must have a clear understanding of the grammatical relationships between the lexical items and needs to grasp the semantics of a particular grammatical item I a particular context which are familiar with the precise meaning of the particular grammatical devices used, structural words, word orders, word forms, and broad patterns of sentences."

Among other qualities that enable news writers to produce a well-written news piece the convergence idea underpinning is that writers must use language that is simple, clear, precise, correct/standard, common and appropriate (Leiter, et al, 2000:3;Hicks and Holmes, 1999:i; The Associated Press (2000:1&6); Harries and Spark, 1993:77-78;McKane, 2006:105;Pape and Featherstone, 2005:26-7,and LaRocque, 2003:13).

Regarding the need for concise/vigorous writing, Bowles and Borden (2004:107) state that 'news stories need to be tight and fast pace.' This is necessary because today's readers need information presented in concise manner. To this effect, a sentence should not contain no unnecessary words and a paragraph no unnecessary sentence.

Another important point worth mentioning is that there is a pride in a well-written news piece. This demands the need to find the right word filling it with other words in a sentence; constructing a

paragraph that conveys meaning and creates delight to readers (Pape & Featherstone (2005:26-27) and McKane (2006:vii).

Bowles and Borden (2004:105), and LaRocque (2003:91) underline that the rule of good grammar, punctuation and spelling should always be front and center in editors mind. This is because these aspects are important elements for clear and effective writing. Furthermore, readability studies have indicated that news writing which has mistakes/errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, missing or extra words, leaving out important details, disorganization of parts of the news stories and other matters of language have profound influence on readability. Therefore, sport news stories should be presented to readers in a language that readers can read and understand easily, and immediately without being bored and confused.

What is so far discussed recalls that news writers and editors must develop a style of writing that does not violate the standard and basic rules of the language used. It is important to note here that the hallmark of good writing is that readers need news texts with clear writing. Obviously, clear writing needs to use plain language. According to Klare, 1963 (cited in Dubay, 2004:2), “Plain language means adjusting the text with reading ability of the readers and their prior knowledge interest and motive. This, of course, demands the writers and editors knowing their readers.”

In conclusion, if a newspaper’s news text is to be read and survive in today’s world, it should do on the basis of producing readable news story, which meet backgrounds and needs of readers.

This study discusses language use and structure specifically under the following aspects. The assumption that the researchers establish in this regard is that “how words and sentences are formed and used are the best predictors of textual difficulty” (Fry and Sigman, cited in Stone, 1984:32).

2.2.1.1. Word Difficulty

It may be obvious that words are one of the basic assets of writing and speaking. The Associated Press (2000:3) underlines that words are writers' treasuries. Hicks, et al, (1999:136) also describe words and phrases, as they are “the building blocks and flourishing of writing.”

Dale and Chall, 1995(cited in DuBay, 2004:12) write: “It is not accident that vocabulary is also a strong predictor of text difficulty. The meaning of words is the strongest predictor of verbal and intellectual development .The knowledge of words has always been a strong measure of reader’s development reading comprehension.” Regarding this, there may be different word variables that can affect readability. In this study factors of word difficulties (among others), such as word unfamiliarity, vagueness, wastage/, and inappropriateness are studied. These are considered because it is these factors that readers understudy mention in their critics.

Familiarity of words is one element that contributes to ease of reading. DuBay (2004:12) confirms that the knowledge of words has always been a strong measure of reader’s development of reading comprehension. Therefore, writers should always make sure that they use words that readers know and understand easily and immediately. This is because, as journalism scholars noted, a writing success is measured when readers know exactly what a writer wants to convey. In similar manner, McAdams, 1993 (cited in Izard, 1993:51) stated that complex, unfamiliar and jargon language affect readability. (DuBay 2004:12) indicates: “The more frequent word is used, the more familiar it is and the easier to use.” Klare, 1980 (cited in DuBay, 2004:12) also, states that “not only do humans tend to use some words much more often than others but also recognize more frequent words more rapidly than less frequent, prefer them, and understand.” DuBay (2004:10) also stipulates “this variable has such a central role in the measurement of words.” Kemper, 1983 (cited in DuBay, 2004:32) explains that “word familiarity do contribute to the comprehension of a text.” So, using only the standard terms/ words and expressions common to the general readers’ life is the job of writers and editors. Thus, as Broughton, et al, (1980:94) put, it may be clear that part of what is involved in understanding a text understands by the meaning of individual words. This is not an end either-readers must understand the patterns of relationship between words- the semantic patterns of the lexical items.

Word economy is another factor for concise and vigorous news writing. Hence, writers and editors need to save words for saving space and readers’ time is one quality of journalistic writing (Evans, 2000:31). This is probably why Evans (2000:31) states, “the test of successful writing style is economy of the readers' attention.” Therefore, writers and editors need to check and scrutinize every word and strike out words that are not working, and unnecessarily used and repeated. Bowles and Borden (2004:109) underlines that a mark of good writing is economy of language. So, it is the writers or editors job to delete words that don’t contribute to the clarity and conciseness of the news writing.

Equally important, clarity of words is also essential. Therefore, the writers or editors must clear individual words so that the reader understands their meaning. Bunton et al,(1999:5) stress that “there is no truer blueprint for successful writing than making your readers see. It is the essence of great writing. Clarity allows us to see. This is achieved by working with the most basic material: word.” Thus, choosing the right words is an important first step forward achieving clarity.

Generally, vocabulary difficulty studies suggested to use standard/ correct, necessary, and familiar or frequently used, specific, precise, clear/simple or easy and appropriate words DuBay (2004:12-13). However, Taylor, 1953 (cited in DuBy, 2004:26-27) argues, “words are not the best measure of difficulty but how they related to on another. He, therefore, proposed a deletion test called ‘Cloze Tests’ for measuring a reader understands of a text. The test is based on the theory that readers are better able to fill in the missing words as their reading skills improve (DuBay, 2000:27).

Sentences are another language aspect by which complete ideas are conveyed. In order to convey such meaningful thoughts sentences need to be constructed according to the standards of a language. It is this and other issues of sentence usage and construction that the study is concerned.

2.2.1.2.Sentence Difficulty

Readability studies have indicated that sentence length; clarity, precession, correct language usage and how sentences link separate or similar thoughts influence readability. Similarly journalism scholars indicate the significance of sentence length as a key element of readability prediction.

In connection to how sentence length affects readability, McAdams, 1993(cited in Izard, 1993:51) explains that sentence length is directly and inversely related to text ease of reading and comprehension. This means as sentence length goes up; readers' understanding and retention go down. As DuBay (2004:19) underlines, sentence length is the best textual predictor. In this regard, Klare(1963:171) confirms that sentence length affects readers’ understanding of a news text. He describes why it affects as follows:

Sentence length is a factor for readability is due to the human "memory span" the ability to recall material correctly only one presentation. Studies have shown that memory span differs with the age and intellectual ability of the subjects.

Regarding, the effect of sentence length, Pape and Featherstone (2005:52) state: "A well-written news story should read smoothly with easy – to flow sentences –the reader should not have to keep going back to unpick multiple clauses and workout what is being said." Gunning, 1985 (cited in Stone, 1985:18) also indicates why sentence length affects readability. He explains: "longer sentence have more words. More words mean more relationships. More relationships require the reader to expend more mental energy. He emphasizes to use simple words and short sentences." Timothy, (1994:2) emphasizes the adverse effect of using longer sentences. He states: "The longer the sentence, the higher the hurdle the reader must cross." McAdams, 1993 (cited in Izard, 1993:51) indicates that Flesch's Index, which is based on Psychological principles, confirms that readers can be slowed by long sentences. So, the premise is that "a sentence is more likely to be clear if it is a short one communicating one idea/thought or closely connected range of ideas"(Evans, 2000:17). However, some readability scholars argue that sentences should vary in length. For example, LaRocque (2003:75) states the need for varying sentence length. He says:" Varying sentence length can give rhythm to writing. And long sentences with rhythm often can be clear and more pleasing than short sentences without rhythm." Hicks, et al, (1999:139-141) like LaRocque, recommend varying the length of sentences. They note "the impact of a short sentence is greater if it comes before or after a long one or served long ones". They, however, mention, "there is no sense in writing a series of long sentences unless a writer wants to make a reader sleep."

Adding to the above argument, Harris and Spark (1993:79) mention that "it is possible to write clear and long sentences, but it is not easy to write clear long sentences in a hurry to meet deadlines. This is because writing longer piece requires writers to write well-constructed long sentences." They recommend 'not to making sentences too short for they are staccato and disjointed. They also indicated, "The longer the sentences the higher the hurdle a reader must pass."

Different readability experts, for example, Gunning, 1944 (cited in DuBay, 2004:23) indicated that sentence length has relationship with readability. For this reason, these experts in the area have

suggested sentence length standards that can promote readability. This in return requires the news writer to make all his/her sentences short by avoiding all unnecessary details and treats his/her stories only in outline in which every word works. He further said that ‘sentences carrying dross not only take up more space but also make eyes and mind weary.’ They also obscure meaning (Evans, 200:32).

Flesch (1949:3) also suggests that newspaper writers should keep their average sentence length not more than 19 words to a sentence. Gunning,(cited in Izard,1985:16) in his part suggests that writers were passing the danger line at more than 20 words in an average sentence length. Thomas (1985:19) suggests 17 to 20 words were readable for news. Hicks & Spark (1993: 35) says that whenever the average sentence length climbs to 20 words or more, many readers are in trouble. They suggest 16 words to a sentence. They also underline that their suggestion is best: 'No other single principle you can follow will yield such quick results in clarity and vigor'. On the other hand, he suggests that if a sentence is longer than 25 words, it will be difficult to finish. He adds that a sentence that is too long will cry, "Stop me." Paul asks to read it aloud so that the reader will hear ‘the cry.’ Sherman, 1893 (cited in DuBay, 2004:10-11) states that shorter sentences and concrete terms increase readability. Long and involved sentences cannot readily be understood” He suggests 20 words to a sentence. McAdams, 1993 (cited in Izard, 1993:52) indicates that sentence length exceeding 15 words in news writing, comprehension drops sharply. Flesch (1949:22) suggests the following average sentence length based on his research results.

Average sentence length	Readability
8 words or less	Very easy to read
11 words	Easy to read
14 words	Fairly easy to read
17 words	Standard (a score of between 60 to 70)
21 words	Fairly difficult to read
25 words	Difficult to read
29 words	Very difficult to read

Having discussed the literature with the news language structure and usage, the following section briefly presents another factor that may affect readability-structuring the news stories

2.2.2. Structure of the News Reporting

It has been noted that the ways news stories are structured are factors that determine reader's easy reading. Fry and Sigma (cited in Stone, 1984:2) confirms in their readability study that the structuring of information carries the impact and regulates readers' understanding of the news texts. Different readability researches undertaken have also confirmed that story structure as a whole influences readers' comprehension of the reported story. According to some scholars contents of news story may be simple but shaping it in unfamiliar structure can make the text unnecessarily difficult and thereby discourage readers (Calfee and Curley, 1984; cited in DuBay2004: 34).

In sum, it has been noted that the way a writer shapes and organizes information of the news story affects readers' understanding, interpretation and evaluation. This affects, particularly, if readers have no or limited prior knowledge and experience on the story reported (Fry and Sigman ; cited in Stone,1984:10).

Due to these understandings, the traditional way of reporting hard news in today's journalism is to begin the story with the most important point of the story which is develop by others which are put in order of their importance. In this regard, for example, Timothy (1994:1) puts it bluntly that every news story begins with a lead. He adds that research has shown that a story attracts or puts off the reader with its first sentence-the lead. Thus, according to journalism scholars, the inverted pyramid form seems to be used at most news publications to structure hard news stories. For example, Mckane (2006:28) states that "the inverted pyramid is the highly structured, efficient and time saving way of organizing information preceding by revealing progressively more details about the reported event."

Likewise, sports news stories are usually reported in the traditional way – the most important point being in the beginning paragraph, the lead (Leiter, et al, 2000:456). Similarly, Scalan (2000:155), and Bowles and Borden (2004:105) state that good sports reporting use the inverted pyramid. He further explains that sports news writers need to start their stories with the most interesting fact. He also states that the obvious questions what and where were the match; what was the score; who played, and who served need to be written in the beginning in the lead. Scalan (200:155-156) puts the reasons why the inverted pyramid has become a dominant and widely used form of news writing in today's journalism.

He explains that the inverted pyramid is preferable in the traditional news writing because the inverted pyramid:

- ❑ *meets the test of time. Many readers are hurried, impatient and want get the point immediately.*
- ❑ *allows news writers to rewrite the top of the story continually, keeping it up-to-date.*
- ❑ *is a useful tool force a reporter to sum up the point of the story in a single paragraph*
- ❑ *allows editors to cut stories from the bottom up to fit space and meet deadline.*
- ❑ *engages the readers from the beginning to end.*

In this context, Harris and Spark (1993:171) point out that ‘good sports news reports obey the same rules as good news writing in their structure. They need to answer the obvious questions: what and where was match? What was the score? Who played? Who scored?’ Harris and Spark further said that “sports like news reports need to be in unbroken line of thought from start to finish and they need to end well. As in news, sports news need not start chronologically at the beginning and move through to the end.”

Wilber and Miller (2003:29) also explain that “the inverted pyramid is useful for it allows the reader know what is important quickly; not to waste his/her time to, and scan key points of each story without having search for the news.” For this reason, they (2003:26) underline that the inverted pyramid is a staple in all kinds of news reporting. They further mention that most newspapers’ editors want reporters to write the news stories in the inverted pyramid form.

McKane (2006:28) also states “the inverted pyramid enables to quick reading at any point and still come away with the essence of a story. It allows people to enter a topic to the depth that imposition of details or nuances that they would consider.” He underlines the need to put the most important part of the story in the first paragraph. He said:

The story has to grab the reader's attention by putting the most important and interesting point first so that the reader will be prepared and interest in reading the second paragraph and so on. Readers can move on to another story safe in the knowledge that they do at least know the main piece of news in the first story.

The above literature underlies that the lead is an important factor of readability. It is the beginning of the hard story, which sums up the whole story in a single paragraph answering the 5Ws as much as possible. Schultz (2002:65) states: “The lead is the first few lines of the body of a news story that sets up the rest of the story.” He further explains that “the purpose of sports lead is to create interest and attention that compelling the reader to stick with the story.” Kervin (1997:47) adds: “The first paragraph is extremely important since some readers don’t get past the first couple sentences in article- it needs to contain the real essence of the subject you are writing about. It should set the scene in a feature piece, or sum up the main points in the story.” He further states, “The introduction/intro usually contains the most pertinent snippet of information that you have, having a good grip of news values helps you to assess what should go in it.”

It may be possible to state that an effective lead is the foundation of every part of a news story. Thus, writers should strive to make the lead beckon, invite and entice readers. Writers must convey enough information in the lead to convince that their story is worth reading. Evans (2000:91) underlines the need to write good news lead as follows:

It is the beginning that gives newspaper writers all the trouble. Any effort to get the beginning right in newspaper is worthwhile because the reader will stop there if the writer fails.

Thus, the inverted pyramid demands the news writer to assemble the factual information in descending order of importance/significance. The idea is that a news story states the most important point first, the second most important point comes next, the third next and so on (McKane, 2006:46). In this regard, Bowles & Borden (2004:102) explain that the news story begins with climax or the most important fact, and then compiles the rest of the information in a way that would allow the story to be trimmed from the bottom whenever required.

Saxena (2006:45) suggests that 90 percent of the news reports are written the inverted pyramid. He (2006:35) further confirms that the most important news is reported at the beginning paragraph of the news story and the less important parts of the story are placed next in order of their importance.

Based on what can be referred in most literatures and seen in today's newspapers reporting trend, the inverted pyramid is used in the classic hard news story writing. The researcher, however, has come

across few scholars with different views. For example, Mitchell (cited in Scalan, 2000:154) criticizes the inverted pyramid. He states that it is "out-dated, unnatural, boring, artless and a factor in declining readership." He further comments "the inverted pyramid loses slimly in a sense defying readers awake."

2.2.3.Content Organization

The architecture is upon which the framework of the content is built is another defining factor of readability. It is in this overview that the reader is most likely gain an understanding of what the text is really all about (Broughton, et al., 1980:96)

DuBay (2004:34) explains that organization and coherence highlight the relationships between word, sentences, paragraphs, and larger section of text. So, Meyer, 1982(cited in DuBay, 2004:32) argues that the how these units are organized in a text can possibly measure readability. Kintsch, 1977(cited in DuBay, 2004:32), in his discussion on cognitive and structural issues of readability, has found out that coherence has a central role in text readability. He states: "Lack of coherence affects lower- grade readers much more than upper-grade ones. The upper-grade readers, in fact, feel challenged to recognize the text themselves. They may require more opportunities for solving problems, while lower-grade readers require more carefully organized texts.

Generally, readability researches buttressed that "the way a news story is shaped and written affects and regulates readers' attention and interest to read or not to read a depicted story" Fry and Sigman (cited in Stone, 1984:17). These researches also addressed the effects of content organization and coherence. For example, Meyer, 1982 (cited in DuBay, 2004:32) states that "people read faster and understand more news information when the news ideas are coherently organized." Armbruster, 1984(cited in DuBay, 2004:33) has also found out that the most important feature for comprehension is textual coherence. She further underlines that recalling stories from memory is superior when the organization of the story is clear. She also points out that "readers read less and slowly a news story text if it is disorganized." In this regard, Lieter, et al, (2000:52) state that the incidents of the story should not be put in chaos and confusion. Writers must link them each other and to the main story. It may be possible to assume that failing to do this, results in lack of coherence that in turn affects

readers. Hicks, et al, (1999:129) emphasizes “that the writer must say things in the right order without repeating aimlessly repeating them or digressing too far from the main point.”

On the other hand, readers may be confused by the way sentences convey different ideas. Needlessly linked sentences divert the mind to speculation. Thoughts should be linking coherent. Incoherence can happen when a sentence is overloaded with more than one idea. Showing the connection among story ideas in a recognizable pattern is essential for readability

It is equally important that the news writing should promote attention to details after having got the lead first. The remaining news points follow in decreasing order of importance Regarding idea flow and link. DuBay (2004:34) states as follows:

Organization and coherence highlight the relationships between words, sentences, paragraphs and larger sections of a text. They enable readers to fit new items of information into their own cognitive systems of organizations.

Therefore, it is the writer's and editors task to review or ensure a text if facts are organized into a continuous and fair readable thread of thought. To do this, writers and editors should connect their texts with the readers’ world by consulting their reading skill and adjust with their readability levels (Klare, 1963, cited in DuBay, 2004: 26).

2.3.Conclusion

The ideas presented so far in this chapter are some points that are relevant to the study. It emphasizes that news writers should know and employ the basic principles of using news writing. This is because these principles are still valid. These include using:

- (a) words that are clear, common, standard, inspiring, appropriate, precise/economical, grammatically correct and necessary;
- (b) sentences relatively short, precise, grammatically correct and standardized, and meaningful and necessary, and convey single idea or related
- (c) a structure that shapes contents of the news in a way readers can understand and puts them in order of their relevance and

(d) coherent organization of news contents.

As it was noted above there have been different theoretical arguments in perceiving readability, and the factors that affect text readability and to measure level of difficulty. In sum, studies of the effects of textual variables are often inconsistent, inclusive, or non-existent. Besides, no one would say that any of these items are not helpful or do not affect readability (DuBay, 2004).

Having these theoretical backgrounds, the researcher has discussed the methods used to investigate the research hypotheses in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

3.0. Introduction

This part presents the research design, methodology of data collection, the sampling technique and size of the subjects. It also briefly discusses the theoretical framework of the methodological approach and techniques of data collection and analysis, and their appropriateness/ relevance to study.

3.1. Research Design

As noted in chapter one, the purpose of this study is to investigate sports' news readers' viewpoints/ experiences on the extent of readability of the sports news texts under study. The researcher has first a clear idea about the nature of the research questions that were used to select and check which methods are necessary and appropriate to answer the research questions.

In order to study the ease of readability of the news texts under study, the researcher had to see the case in the readers' perspective. This is because the results of statistical analysis may not be the best readability predictors. The reason is that there are variables that can affect readability, but cannot be detected by measuring. For example, readability studies found out that it is difficult to measure the effects of news stories structuring and coherent organization, and headline writing on easy reading and understanding. Moreover, the studies showed that writing strategies on easy reading and understanding are very often inconsistent and inclusive (DuBay, 2004:28). Similarly, Meyer, (cited in DuBay, 2005:6) indicates that it is difficult to catch/measure under-reporting and boring writing by measures.

Furthermore, DuBay (2004:31) indicates that "measurement may not be a practical method because readers are of different backgrounds. People whom one is studying may view things differently from what another outsider with little contact might have expected." Similarly, Kintch (cited in DuBay, 2004:31-2) in his research found out that 'measures are not based on modern Linguistic theories and overlooked the interaction between the reader and the texts.

As it may be possible to understand from the above literatures, it is difficult to tress the complexity of easy reading and understanding of a news text indirectly. Thus, as Bryman (2004:60) states, the researcher had to involve himself in face-to-face interaction for it enabled him to participate and understand readers' points of views on the extent of the news readability from them and probe information beneath the surface linguistic appearances of the texts. On the other hand, the researcher is not saying that other methods of measures cannot be used to predicate readability difficulty. For example, as it is mentioned in the literature review, readability formulas contributed to measure the level of word and sentence difficulty in many languages worldwide (DuBay, 2004:1).

To this end, the researcher assumes that the qualitative approach may be appropriate and necessary to investigate the research questions of the study by getting and talking to the right people who were concerned by the subjects of the study. This is because the qualitative method might suit better to observe readers' views for the method stresses the need to see through the eyes of the researcher to understand readers' attitude in their own views.

Flick (2002:13) explains "qualitative research is concerned with analyzing phenomena in their temporal and local contexts." He further discusses that this strategy "allows researchers to assess readers' reflections on their actions and observations in the field, their impressions, irritations, and feelings and so on become data in their own right forming part of the interaction, and are documented in research or context protocols."

Further more, this research strategy is employed for it has been attested to study social matters in the people's perspective. In this regard, Bryman (1988:61) states: "Qualitative research has committed to viewing events, actions, norms, values, etc, from the perspective of the people who are being studied."

Further more, Flick (2005:7) indicates that qualitative study provides detailed information of people's points of view and the meaning they attribute to their experiences. Similarly, Bryman (2004:280) states: "Qualitative studies provide a detailed account of what is going on in the setting being investigated. The details provide an account of the context with in which peoples' behavior takes place."

Generally, qualitative research is concerned with the understanding of peoples' attitude in terms of context in which they express their reaction. It takes into account that viewpoints and practices in the

field are different because of the different subjective perspectives and social backgrounds related to them. (Flick, 2005:6) Thus, it was with these points in mind that the researcher has used the qualitative method to investigate topic of his study.

In order to investigate and acquire readers' points of view, the researchers had to involve him with face-to-face interaction with the sports newsreader for it is, as (Bryman, 2004:279) describes it, "the fullest condition of participating in the mind of another human being." Therefore, the researcher has employed the two traditional methods of qualitative data collection. These are semi-structured interview and focus group discussion. These techniques are presented as follows.

3.1.1. Methods of Data Collection

3.1.1.1. Semi-Structured Interview

The semi-structured interview was conducted following the field observation. Preliminary information was obtained during the field observation. As it is stated earlier in this study, the researcher could observe from the readers' reactions that there are linguistic aspects that might affect ease of reading of the news stories of the newspapers under study. Therefore, the researcher was interested to further understand some individual readers' opinions/views on the readability of the news stories.

To this end, the application of semi-structured interview is appropriate and necessary. This is because it has been noted that this method is one of the most widely used technique to understand and obtain readers' points of view or experiences on the topics under study (Flick, 2002:80). Besides, the interview is used for the researcher could not bring those individual readers in a focus group discussion in one place and at a time. The semi-structured interview was conducted using open-end questions to understand interviewees' subjective view about the issues under study.

The researcher could interview 37 readers. Some of them are those whom he observed reading relatively for some time. Those readers were found while reading in cafes, at Addis Ababa Football Stadium, tearooms, at 'chat' chewing houses, shops and work places. The interviewees included those who were government employees (They were 14); engaged in private businesses (They were 12), and students (They were 11). Their ages ranged from 17 to 57, and educational backgrounds were from grades six to MA degrees.

Data collection using this method was conducted during August 1st to 30th, 2007.

3.1.1.2. Focus Group Discussion

Bryman (2004:345) defines focus group as it is “a form of group interview in which there are several participants /in addition to the moderator/; there is an emphasis in the questioning on a particular fairly and tightly defined topic, and the access upon interaction within the group, and the joint construction of meaning”.

The researcher wants to employ focus group discussion for it is the way which opinions are produced, expressed, exchanged in every day life. Another feature of group discussion is that corrections are made by the group concerning views that are not correct, not socially shared or extreme are available as a means validating statements and views. It is a tool for reconstruction individual opinions more appropriately (Flick 2002:114). In similar manner, Patton (cited in Flick, 2002:113) explains that this strategy is “a highly efficient qualitative data collection technique which provides some quality participants tend to provide checks and balances on each other that weed out false or extreme view” It is also possible to assess relatively consistent and views among the group participants during their interaction.

In this regard, Bryman (2004:347) elaborates that this technique is “a popular method to examine the way in which people in conjunction with one another construe the general topics in which the researcher is interested”

As presented earlier, focus group discussion is appropriate for the study for it allowed the researcher how the people under study felt and viewed the readability of sports newspapers; to offer the readers to probe each other’s reasons for holding a certain view; to qualify or modify his/her view as he/she listened to others’ answers, to elicit a wide variety of different views in relation of the topics of the study, and to offer the researcher the opportunity to study in which individual participants made sense of the readability of the news stories (Bryman, 2004:348). In these theoretical lights, the researcher conducted five groups’ discussions that consisted of homogenous and heterogenous combinations.

As it is stated above in this part, the three people whom the researcher knew before helped him in organizing participants of the four focus groups at the chat houses (three groups) and another group of sport professionals.

3.1.1.2.1. Forms of the Focus Group

There were two forms of groups. These are homogeneous and heterogeneous groups. This approach helps the researcher to collect data from variety of group discussions.

Members of the two forms of groups were selected by convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is elaborated in the sampling technique later in this part. On the other hand, the researcher was aware that he had to involve participants who were from the natural setting and were concerned by the issues of the study. In line with this, NieBen (cited in Flick, 2002:115) mentioned: “Participants of the group discussions should be real. They should have shared history of interaction in relation to the issues under discussion and thus have already developed forms of common experiences.” With this knowledge in mind, participants were selected for the groups.

a/ The homogeneous groups

Participants of this form were those who have similar experience related to sport news reading and background in profession, occupation and their sports newspapers reading experience.

Therefore, there were three homogenous groups. These include:

- (1) One group consisted of only journalists by profession
- (2) One consisted experts whose occupation and profession is sports.
- (3) The other one had participants, who dropped out reading sports newspapers,

The journalists group had the following members:

- (1) Sisay who was a private journalist and had MA in journalism
- (2) Sahile who was a journalist at Ethiopian Television and had a BA journalism and communication

- (3) Tamiru who was working in private college and had an MA in journalism and communication
- (4) Amanuel who was a private organization employee and had an MA in journalism and communication
- (5) Solomon, who was a journalist at Ethiopian television and had a BA in theatrical art, and
- (6) Teferi who was a second year MA student of journalism and communication.

The researcher purposefully involved the journalists for they have taken courses on news writing during their courses/studies. So, they could evaluate the news writing of the news stories given to them. Those who participated in the following group were similar in that they were sport professionals. They were:

- (1) Abera who was working at a government organization and had MA in sports,
- (2) Azeb (female) who was working at a government organization and had MA in sports
- (3) Fisha who was working at a government organization and studying for his MA in sports and
- (4) Abebaw who was working at a government organization and was studying for his MA in sports
- (5) Haregewoin who was working at a government organization and had MA in sports, and
- (6) Anbesaw who was working at a government organization and had BA in sports,

The third group consists of the following members who had different demography. They are similar in that they dropped out sports newspapers reading being dissatisfied by the writing style of the newspapers. These are:

- (1) Kefyalew who was a bar owner and had a diploma in accounting.
- (2) Worku who was a bar owner and 12 complete.
- (3) Samson who was private employee, and had BA in agriculture and computer science.
- (4) Wondewosen who was a solicitor and had a diploma in hotel management.
- (5) Efreem who was an accountant and had a certificate in accounting.
- (6) Admasu who was a businessman, and had BA in accounting.

Members of this group were asked why they stopped reading in addition to other questions asked for all participants.

b. The heterogeneous groups

Members of this form of group were those who are different in characteristics that are relevant for the research question. As Flick/ 2002:115) states, the researcher uses this form of group to increase the dynamics of the discussion so that many different perspectives are expressed.

Two heterogeneous groups were used which consisted the following participations. Members of one group are:

- (1) Getachew who had MA in Cartography and was government employee
- (2) Tesfeye who and was working at government institution as auto technician, and completed grade 12
- (3) Fikadu who has similar background as Tesfaye above
- (4) Tewodros, who was a taxi driver and completed grade 12
- (5) Miki who was a computer technician and had a BA in computer science,.
- (6) Kebede who was a policeman and had diploma in auto mechanics

Members of the other heterogeneous group were:

- (1) Yitagesu, who was a solicitor for a private intuit and had completed grade 12
- (2) Tilahan who was a clerk at government bank and had a diploma in accounting and studying for his BA
- (3) Abrham who was an accountant at government bank and had a diploma and was studying for his BA
- (4) Teferi who was a photographer, at government office and had a diploma in electricity and photographing
- (5) Tewdros who was a clerk at a government bank and had a diploma in accounting
- (6) Hussen who was 'chat' seller and was a student at grade 7.

The ages of members of the heterogeneous groups in general ranges from ages 18 to 53. The results of each forms of group are compared to determine if there are different or similar results.

3.1.1.2.2. Number of the Focus Groups

As Bryman (2004:351) states, the researcher being a student, was not able to conduct more focus group discussions. This is because especially focus group discussion took him relatively long time and efforts to find volunteers and organize them in those groups.

Though this was the case, the researcher thought that the number of semi-structured interviewees and focus groups were enough. This is because, as Bryman (2004:349) notes, the researcher was able to anticipate what the next interviewees and group discussions participants were going to say. The researcher has attempted to continue until similar viewpoints were repeated and little or no new points were generated. He notes that his issues of the study were saturated. Thus, the researcher has decided to terminate data collection in those groups for he has found there was no reason to continue the semi – structured interview and focus group discussions further. He has got similar and repeated responses to the questions in what he so far had obtained.

The researcher attempted to organize the sixth group that had only females. This was planned to make the study gender sensitive. But those who agreed to participate in the focus group discussion could not come together in one place at a time for their various reasons. Therefore, they participated in semi-structured interviews instead. The researcher gave twenty stories to the participants.

3.1.1.2.3. Size of Group Participants

As far as the size of participants in each group is concerned, six participants for each group were involved. Hansen et al, (1998:270) states that some media researchers recommend six to ten members are the ideal size of members of participants in each group. With this view in mind, the researcher used six participants for each group. This number was what the researcher could manage to get. The researcher made all the groups to have similar number (six) of participants to compare the findings with equal number of participants.

3.1.1.2.4. Sampling and Selection of Group Participants

It may be understood that focus group research in media study rarely sought to obtain representation or of the general population. Rather participants can be selected according to specific dimensions and

thoughts significant to the way in which readers' use and view media text. In this regard, David, et al, (1999:54) state: "What is common to all qualitative sampling procedure, is that the selection of sample units is consciously shaped by the research agenda." Hence, focus group participants who were able and willing to provide the desired information and interested in reading sports newspapers will be recruited. Each of these groups will be deliberately chosen.

As Hansen, et al, (1998: 265) points out that those participants were recruited from the 'naturally existing' setting. For this study, it is the sport newspapers readers. The researcher found, contacted and engaged the appropriate desired types of group participants who are believed to understand the textual elements that might have been affecting their ease of reading.

Concerning the number of focus groups to be conducted, as David, et al, (1999:54) put, the main factor to decide the number of groups to be conducted is the types of the research questions asked across different groups characteristics specified by the objectives of the research. Taking these considerations into account, the researcher, as mentioned above, has conducted a five-focus group discussion.

Since the sample was not representative of all the news stories of the newspapers, the study's results are not generalizable. However, the study contains representation from all the newspapers.

The researcher selected 20 long news items (two from each newspaper). The longest stories were selected and given to the readers for they might give better opportunity to examine the issues of the study further than the short ones.

3.1.2. Data Analysis Techniques

3.1.2.1. Framework to Guide Data Analysis

The researcher has considered the analytic induction strategy as a framework to guide the collection and analysis data of the research questions data (Bryman, 2004:399). This strategy is noted as one of the most frequently used approach to analyses qualitative (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006:17 and Bryman, 2004: 399). The researcher has used the analytic induction to define topics of his interest; to develop a hypotheses, and to study cases to see if hypotheses work or not (Wimmer and Dominic, 2006:118).

In connection to this, Bryman (2004:400) defines analytic induction, as it is “an approach to the analysis of data in which the researcher seeks a universal explanation of phenomena by pursuing the collection of data until no cases that are inconsistent with hypothetical explanations of phenomena are found”

The researcher has used the analytic induction by following the steps that Bryman (2004:400) puts. Accordingly, the researcher has begun his study by providing a hypothetical explanation of the problem and finally collected data (examined the case).

3.1.2.2. Data Analysis

In line with the general strategy of data analysis, the analytic induction, the researcher employed narrative analysis to collect and analyze the data obtained from the focus group discussion and interview methods.

Narrative analysis technique was employed for it has been a traditional technique used to search and analyses qualitative data that people employ to account for events (Bryman, 2004:413). He further explains that his technique was used to collect and analyze the data that were generated during focus group discussion and semi-structured interview. Besides the narrative analysis allowed the researcher to approach the interviewee’s experiential world in a more comprehensive way (Flick, 2002:90). Thus, the data that were relevant to the study were collected and grouped into appropriate and meaningful five categories. These are presented in this part later. Then the explanations that have been emerged from the data are presented and interpreted

3.1.3. Sampling Techniques

Since, the study was a qualitative one; it was not concerned with objects’ representation. Therefore the researcher used non- random sampling technique to select participants for the semi- structured interview and focus group discussion. The news texts were selected using this technique. In the non-random sampling, convenience and purposive techniques were used. Convenience sampling technique is used to select participants who were volunteer and easy to find. On the one hand, purposive sampling was used to select subjects who have educational background on journalism and

communication and to select the longest news stories for the group discussions and female interviewees.

Regarding the appropriateness for the studies such as this, of the non-random sampling, Wimmer and Dominic (2006:90-91) state: “Mass media researches frequently use non- random sampling, particularly in the form of convenience samples, sample using volunteer subjects or elements selected for characteristics or qualities and those who/which fail to meet the criteria.”

3.1.4.The Interview Guide

Since it has been a common traditional practice in qualitative study, the researcher used an interview guide that helped him to keep the discussion on the issues relevant to the study. (The guide is reproduced in the appendix)

The guide gives direction to the sequence of pre-determined questions asked under each theme of the study. Furthermore, one of the plain reasons to have a clear interview guide is to ensure that it was followed consistently through and all the focus groups involved in the study.

3.1.4.1.The Role of the Researcher

The role of a researcher depends on the subjects of analysis and the type of responses that is sought and the nature of the participants, Hansen, et al, (1998:256). In this study, the researcher was part of the discussion without active participation and intervention in the group discussion. Therefore, his roles were essentially to facilitate or moderate and stimulate the discussion among the participants. His typical roles were ensuring that

- . issues and topics outlined in the interview guide were covered in the discussion
- . a reasonable balance of participation among the participants was maintained
- . the discussion was kept on the subjects/ issues relevant to the study (Hansen, et al,1998:256).

3.1.4.2. Procedures in Conducting the Interview and Focus Group Discussions

Pre-determined questions were asked for the semi-structured interview and focus group discussions. Sequences of the questions were established in the interview guide. However, the researcher asked questions that were not in the sequence of the structured questions. These questions were asked during some participants mentioned some issues which the researcher wanted clarification and to get the relevant information during the discussion.

The sequence typically followed telling the participants about the researcher and what the purpose of the interview; asked participants to introduce themselves and then moved gradually towards from the general to the specific issues/ topics and questions. The researcher also explained the essence of the general and specific questions. This helped to make the participants understand and answer and discuss. The interview and the focus group discussions began by asking participants about their habit of reading sports newspapers. Those questions were asked to stimulate interviews' main narrative. For this reason the responses were not included in the study's data.

Latter, they were asked whether they easily read and understood the news texts that the interviewees read before and the group participants the news stories they were given. They were asked to describe and discuss what elements of the writing style affected their ease of reading. Those questions were then followed by specific questions used to inquire details of specific topics that were not exhaustively mentioned during the generative questions. The specific questions are presented in the interview guide. /see the appendix /

The focus group discussion participants were exposed to the selected 20 news texts. Each participant of the groups was given a copy of 20 news stories ahead of the group discussion days. The stories were given to the readers before interview and focus group days to give readers relatively enough time to read them. They were asked to read and identify the problems they might have observed. In general, they have evaluated the writing of the texts and came for the group discussions and ready.

Participants of the journalists group were also asked to evaluate and identify problems of the news writing in terms of their prior knowledge of journalism. This has helped the researcher to know the existence of the problems and other issues the interviewees and group members rose.

3.1.4.3. Interview and Group Discussion Locations

The participants determined the locations both for the semi- structured and focus group discussion. The semi-structured interview was conducted at the places where the interviewees were working, watching football matches, and taking tea and coffee and chewing 'chat' at 'chat' chewing houses. ('Chat' is a green plant whose leaf is used by some people to stimulate them) The focus group discussions were conducted at three 'chat' chewing houses for the heterogeneous groups and one homogeneous group. The 'chat' houses were located at 'Sengatera', 'Mexico square' and 'Filwuha' (near Sheraton Addis). My office was used for one homogeneous group (for the sports experts) and at café for journalists.

The interview was conducted from August 1st to September 30th. The focus group discussions were conducted from August 7 to September 5, 2007 on Saturdays and Sundays. The weekends were selected for it was on these days that all group members came and gathered. Besides, they stayed for relatively longer hours chewing and chatting. So, the researcher had enough time to conduct the discussion. The focus group discussions took about an hour at average.

3.1.5. Recording the Data

It has been a common experience that the principal data produced by focus groups are verbal responses, statements, opinions agreements and interactions of the participants (Hansen et al, 1998: 279). Thus, the focus group discussions, except one heterogeneous group at a 'chat' house, were recorded after getting participants consents by giving assurance to confidential where appropriate. The researcher attempted to convince the group that refused the recording but participants were involuntary for the reason/s they did not want to tell. Instead they told the researcher that they would speak slowly so that the researcher could write down their narrations.

The researcher had an assistant to take note for fear the researcher might miss some points. At the end of the group discussions, the researcher and his assistant checked their notes. Fortunately, there were

no differences in the note taking. For other groups their discussions were recorded. The recordings, then, were transcribed. In addition, observational notes were taken down during the discussions.

3.1.6. Categories of Responses

As Hansen, et al, (1998: 279) underline, the necessity of categorizing responses in relation to their headings; the researcher grouped the relevant collected data to some topics into appropriate and meaningful categories. He then analyzed the types of responses generated in relation to their perspective headings determined by the research framework and set out in the interview guide. The categories obviously vary depending on the research questions or objectives of the research. Therefore, the categories are grouped in to four themes. These are: 1. Word difficulties, 2. Sentence difficulties, and 3. structure of news stories, availability of required information and details and 5. Coherent organization of news contents/

The data were first arranged according to the sequence of the question during the discussion. After the data were prepared for analysis, the data were then organized into their respective categories.

Since some responses didn't fit any pre-set category, new classifications were made. Those were, for example, layout, typography, accuracy and ethical questions that are not the concern of the paper. These are not included in the study.

3.2. Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher briefly discusses the research design, that is, methods of data collection, data analysis techniques, sampling techniques, the interview guide, and categories of the thematic areas of the responses, and interview and focus group discussion. It is stated that the qualitative method is used for the aim of the study is to investigate readers' views/experiences on the readability of hard news of the local sport newspapers. The traditional ways of qualitative research data collection (semi-structured and focus group discussion) were used to test the research hypothesis. The following chapter presents the research data (findings) and the interpretations of the findings.

CHAPTE FOUR: PRSENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.0. Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the narrative stories based on generic conceptual framework. For analytical reasons; the narrative stories are presented by specifying among five major themes / categories. These include: word and sentence difficulties, headline writing, news stories structuring, and news contents organization. The research findings are reported as facts or documented by using quotations from the statements of the participants. The participants' statements are interpreted by providing general theoretical/conceptual grounds.

The researcher has applied the thematic coding and categorizing way as discussed by Flick (2002:202). The steps the research followed were as follows:

1. Segmenting the interviews and focus group discussions by formulating heading for each theme and put according to their sequential themes;
2. Stating a short description of each case. This includes a statement that is typical for the interview (the motto of the case). The researcher laid the main stress in presentation on classifying the central points in lines with the developed theories;
3. A short description of the person with regard to the research question (e.g. age, education, occupation) and
4. The central topics the interviewees mentioned concerning the research question/ issue. The statements are presented in quotations. The descriptions of respondents were translated verbatim from Amharic to English.

Since there were participants who gave relatively similar answers for each interview questions, the researcher presents some participants' statements as examples. However, all different statements are presented.

This chapter begins with the one general question asked in the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions: ‘How do you view the readability of the local sport newspapers news stories reporting you read so far?’ That is, ‘Are they easy or difficult to read and understand?’ This question was asked to identify how the readers found the news reporting and what factors are the most important problems that challenged readers’ easy reading and understanding of the news stories.

The general and the specific questions were explained when the researcher noted that the respondents did not understand the questions, and/or if some readers didn’t mention some factors which others mentioned. This was noted when the participants started giving unrelated answers to the questions.

4.1. Readability of Sports News Writing in Question

Since the main focus of the study is to investigate readers’ perceptions of levels of the readability of the writing of the news stories, semi-structured interviewees and focus group participants were asked whether or not the news stories they read were easy to read and understand.

In this regard, Mckane (2006:100) discusses that sports news is a much more leisured piece of writing where the effects of sports news writing is central to readers’ ease of reading and attention grabbing. Therefore, the art of simple and direct news writing should be the motto of news writers. Concerning this, Mckane (2006:105) also underlines: “The best news stories tell your reader as much as possible and as briefly as possible.” This means that news writing need to be direct and snappy.

For all these, language, among other factors, is also central to good news writing. It is a particular discourse with its own vocabulary, sentence, stories structuring and organization. Pape and Featherstone (2005:49) describe that “good newspaper language is vibrant and explicit, but most of all, easily understood by the widest possible audience.”

During the semi-structured interview and focus group discussions, the readers involved in the investigation told that their ease of reading and understanding, and interest were obstructed by one or more influencing factors of the news writing.

They mention the following aspects as problems that obstructed their ease of reading and efficient understanding. These include: word and sentences usage difficulties; non-conventional news

structuring in which it is difficult to find the central points of the news stories for they were messed up arrangement; disorganization of news stories (broken or incoherent line of thoughts from the beginning to the end; lack of necessary details of information in the news stories, uneasy to follow; plastering unrelated issues in a sentence and paragraph). These were the major issues repeatedly mentioned in common by the participant readers.

The focus group discussions were more effective in raising and discussing specific and detail issues under each category than the semi-structured interview. Examples of the narrated stories are presented under each thematic issue category as follows:

4.1.1. Words Counted Against Efficient Comprehension

As Harris and Spark (1993:77) indicate, news stories need to be understood by all readers from a wide variety of backgrounds. In both the semi-structured interview and focus group discussions, the majority of the readers understudy raised aspects of word difficulty. Many of those interviewees and focus group participants indicated that they encountered unfamiliar, not standard and uncommon, (foreign technical words) inappropriate, irrelevant/unnecessary and misspelled word usage that affected their ease of reading and understanding.

However, the researcher investigated that these aspects of word difficulties had different level of influence on different interviewees and group participants. There were some participants in both strategies who didn't mention some word aspects of the study as significant problems of the news readability. But many of them including the journalists indicated that it is common to be interrupted and challenged by some aspects of word difficulties.

One of the problems indicated by the participants of the study was inappropriate word usage. It is stated that word appropriateness has a paramount importance for clear and readable news texts. Therefore, it is the writers' professional quality to use appropriate words that effectively and clearly convey intended meanings. Concerning this, Evans (2000:56) says: "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more or less. Readers' comments underline that the writer should chose one word rather than another." This is because the right choice of words can make a very sharp story (Mckane, 2001:101). Sahile, 43, BA in journalism and communication and a journalist at Ethiopian Television said that the sports news writing was horrible. He further says:

The poor and unprofessional writing of the news texts always discontents me. You can identify word errors in every single sentence. It seemed that the writers never look their work back. Look at these errors from the news texts given to us to read.

He showed some words that were misspelled, unnecessarily repeated and inappropriate words from each newspaper they were given to read as sample.

One of the errors that Sahile showed to his group was the inappropriate or informal word used in the following sentence taken from one of the newspaper understudy. 'The athletes are being trained for the Beijing World Athletics Championship preparation fortifying at 'Ras Amba Hotel.' Here According to Sahile 'the word 'fortifying' is inappropriate. The writer should have said 'living' instead. All other members of the group agreed with what Sahile mentioned.

There were other participants who indicated that writers used inappropriate words. They suggested that writers should not have used such unusual words in formal writing. On the other hand, there were some respondents who like inappropriate language. Thsegaye, a driver, had a diploma and a government employee, was among those who liked the informal word usage. He said:

I like inappropriate word usage. They attract me more than the usual appropriate words. They are powerful to grab attention and emotion So, such words should be used to show the image of sport news. I can understand what they want to say.

There were also some other participants who supported the usage of inappropriate or informal word usage. These data confirmed that what some journalism scholars argue that sports news writing is a little bit informal in reporting news Harris and Spark (1993:171). According to these scholars, informal language usage maintains readers' emotion.

Sisay, 41, MA in journalism and a private journalist, in his part indicated some grammatical errors he identified in the news stories given to him to read. He said:

I always find language usage errors here and there not only in these news stories but also in all the newspapers stories I read before. I can show you some other word usage problems that affected my easy reading and understanding of what was wanted to

say.(He showed the group some words, which had grammatical errors)*I would say, it looks that the news were written by unprofessional writer. They have serious editing problems.*

Mekonnen, 23, had BA in foreign languages studies a government employee similarly mentioned that writers were negligent in choosing the right words that work effectively. He said:

I found some inappropriate words in the texts some of which I could not understand. Such a problem is common in all the newspapers. The extent of the problem varied from newspaper to newspaper. They use words as they wished and came to their minds. A reader has to stop and think what they wanted to say. For example, the word 'Eyadenu' (which in English literarily means hunting) in this sentence is no tan appropriate one because Eyadenu in Amharic is for wild animals.

On the other hand, writers should not over exaggerate by using words to attract readers' eyes or minds that are not maintained in the tone of the story. Thus, writers should not have used attention-grabbing words that are inappropriate to the overall tones or moods of the news stories (Bowles and Borden, 2000:259).Asked how the participants of the two strategies perceived or viewed, all indicated that the words used particularly in the writing of the headlines had been questionable. For example, Worku , 47,12th complete and a bar honor says:

I used to buy newspapers being attracted by powerful words and phrases. But I hardly find any fact in the body as it was said in the headline. Even sometimes what is said the headline was not mentioned anywhere in the body text. This was really a common problem of all the newspapers.

Lulseged, 51, had a diploma in accounting, a government employee and a international linesman of football also states:

The words used especially in the headlines are not only crying but also unrelated to the body stories in most cases. They neither tell the central points nor some part of the stories. The writers use such over exaggerated headlines to cheat the readers' eyes and

minds. Look, how it was disappointing discouraging when what the headline said were not found in the news bodies.

Similarly, Yishak, emphasized that writers write headlines in words that had little relation to the body stories. He further says:

They use over exaggerated headlines. I easily attracted by them and buy them. Sadly, I usually the first paragraph began with unrelated story. I continued searching to find what was said in the headline. I most of the time, could not find. I got angry and sold the newspaper back by lower price.

Word unfamiliarity was another issue raised as a problem. Pape and Featherstone (2005:50) emphasize that writers must use “language that is common and understandable to all-a language that is plain and simple. This is because newspaper readership is not made up of one particular type, but of all people from all woks of life.” Similarly, Harris and Spark (1993:84) state that foreign words present difficulties as much as technical words do .As it is indicted in chapter two, the knowledge of words has always been a strong measure of readers’ reading comprehension.(DuBy:2004:12).In this regard, Tesfaye, 53, a technician at a government institute, was among the majority readers, who mentioned that unfamiliarity of words affected their easy understanding. He says:

Look at this word in the sentence: “Dawite is a ‘libro’ player. I don’t know what the word’ libro’ means. Therefore, I need some body to explain me what it was. Let me add one other example. What does the word ‘FA’ means in this sentence?’ He gave him an FA ball and scored a goal.”

Similarly, Abrham, 47, had a diploma, and an accountant at a government bank indicates as follows:

They used some foreign and technical words that they took from the web news without translating them. Every body like I cannot understand such words. You must be a player or sport professional who know them. I always tried to understand such words after I read some part of the stories. I don’t know for examples technical words like minus,’ forbeach, dreable, abdo’, and the like. I never came across such words in my reading before.

Yishak, 34, had an Orthodox Church education and a private organization employee expressed his problem of understanding of foreign and technical words.

I have no modern education. So, I am always in trouble to understand what some foreign words in the stories were saying. It is a big problem for sport newsreaders such as I.

However, there were participants who believed that those some unfamiliar words to the standard Amharic language were not such serious problems for most readers since they were repeatedly used in the newspapers and heard on the broadcast. For example, Solomon, 38, in theatrical art and journalist at Ethiopian television says as follows:

I think sport newsreaders are those who can understand foreign and technical words of sports. This is because the readers are those who usually watch sport games and events and are familiar with them. This is because they hear the words the sport newspapers use on the media. For example, I don't have any problem with these aspects in my reading. I can guess what the writers wanted to say from the context, however most of the stories did not have contexts. But I don't mean that every reader can understand them all. I know journalists should use Amharic words as long as there are Amharic words, which express the intended ideas. Another problem is getting the information as much as I wanted. As a result it was difficult to understand the messages

However, his group members argued with what Solomon says. They argue that there may be some readers who do not have such problems. But this doesn't mean that all readers are the same. They said that, for example, they were hardly watch sport games on TV or in stadiums.

Like Solomon, the following semi-structured interviewees told similar stories for the same question. Murad, 17, dropped out his education at grade 8, a shop keeper, and Legese, 22, a grade 11 student and a shop keeper stated that their reading never affected by the non- Amharic and uncommon words in the stories. Murad, for example, says:

I had no problem in the English and other technical words. I know them because they are frequently used. I hear the words while I watch match on TV. But I like if they use

Amharic word because I some times found words new to me. I left them without understanding the idea.

The above data may show that media audiences are of different segments. Thus, writers should use languages that are used and understood by general and multiple readers (Bell Alan, 2007:5). Readers' views may also remind that reporters should write for different and distant kind of audiences.

Regarding to the question whether every word is telling the story, all participants of the two techniques commonly raised that this is the most serious problem of all the news stories they read in all the newspapers. They indicated that there were words unnecessary and irrelevant to the stories. Regarding this point, as Mckane (2006:101) underlines, the words used in the news stories should have been clear and told the reader exactly what has happened. Bowles and Borden (1999:101) stress that writer should say what they want to say mean exactly and concisely. One way to achieve conciseness is to make each word meaningful and avoid redundancy.

For example, Getachew, 54, MA in cartography and a government employee indicates:

The writing of the news stories that I read was not to the point. There were words, which didn't tell or add anything to story. Rather had a different idea. The stories were also crowded by pointless details. There were words repeated in many places. They were boring. They interrupted readers' attention.

Similarly, Amanuel, 40, MA in journalism and communication, states:

There is a wasteful word usage in all the newspapers stories because they repeat words unnecessarily and use irrelevant words. So, it is difficult to find the required points easily among. This problem of the writing of the news inevitably hindered the ease of understanding of the news stories.

Tamiru, 38, MA in journalism and communication, a private employee said in to his group discussion that the news stories are compacted by unnecessary and irrelevant details. He further said:

I have attempted to rewrite ten stories among the given news for group discussion, one from each. I could reduce them at least by half. They were full of trash.

The above data may inform that the news stories writing are not all getting the points across. As Manfro (2007:4) states, “making one’s point may be relatively easy in conversation, however, it may be more challenging in writing.” Macro puts the reason: “While we mean one thing when we write what the reader interprets may be something totally different. Sometimes the consequences of this can be significant.” Above all, mass communication is for all the mass readers.

In addition, since the effects of words are central, the writing of sport news texts should have used colorful, telling or listen-to-me and attention-grabbing words for sport stories are much more leisured piece of writing. Concerning this, almost all participants told that the news writers did not use catchy or read me words. For example, Etagegn (Female), 38, BA in sports an expert in government office, says:

Sports events inspire fan’s emotions. Therefore, the writers of the news need to describe and arouse readers’ feelings. The words they used were not punchy and interesting. They were dull and less colorful. They are not engaging. They did not show the image of the news event as it occurred. They are upsetting. If some one asked me what I was reading, I don’t think I could tell what it was about because I had less concentration.

Sisay also says:

I read about a sport event that I watched. But the news writing couldn’t tell/ describe the event as I actually watched it. Some times it is different and incomplete.

However, Thegaye, a driver and a football linesman referee, and Danael, government employee and football linesman said many of the news writing is interesting.

Spelling error is another area of critics. Kervin(1997:34) indicates that” spelling errors upset readers.” Crowder and Wanger (1992:132) add that there is a relation between the visual/the print and cognitive processing they meet the print on the page.” Participants pointed out that they found words, which were not spelled correctly. The readers indicated that the selling errors had some impacts on easy reading and understanding. Woineshet (female), 37, had some training on sports and government employee, for example, says

Whenever I get spelling errors I stopped reading. I am sensitive I started correcting them and continue reading. This in turn disperses my attention. The writers had big problems in this regard. I was thinking about the errors and reading half hearted.

In contrast to the above data some respondents whose mother tongue is not Amharic indicated that they did not note whether a word was grammatically correct or not. What was significant to them was other aspects of word usage raised in this study.

In general, it is the writer's job to make individual words clear so that readers can understand them.(Hicks, et al., 1999:129). If the aim of the news reporting is to reach a mass audience with the words, the writer needs to use common/plain, working and grammatically correct written words that readers can readily understand. Wilber and Miller,(2003:57) explain those difficult, inappropriate, unnecessary and incorrect words detract readers from clear and concise communication. Besides sport news writers should be able to draw readers' eyes and minds to their news pieces.

As it indicated above, some issues of words were not common factors of readability to all participants. For example, word unfamiliarity and inappropriate/informal word usage. Young readers were found out that they were not affected by unfamiliarity usage. The results may be typical indications for reading is an activity where readers employ their prior knowledge/experience to anticipate meaning and use minimal knowledge cues.(Goodman, cited in Gebremedhin,1993:71;Entin and Klare,;cited in DuBay,2004:29)

On the other hand, many participants indicated that unnecessary, irrelevant, and ungrammatical word usages are notable common problems of the readers' easy reading and understanding.

4.1.2. Sentence Structure and Usage: As Textual Predicators

In order to know whether aspects of sentence writing had diverse effect on ease of readability, the researcher asked the participants if they had any difficulty at sentence level. The following issues were raised by the participants impartial and in all.

As it is mentioned in part two, how sentences were constructed and used affect ease of readability. In this regard, readability scholars, such as Harries and Spark, (1999; 60)explain that usage of

ungrammatical, unfocused, clumsy, irrelevant, unnecessary, and too long or short sentences, among others, are influencing factors of easy reading and understanding of news texts. They further (1999; 60) discuss that writers should use grammatical, simple and precise sentences to enable readers easily read and understand a news text.

On the other hand, Bowles and Borden (1999:2004”105) and LaRock(2003:91)make clear that those ungrammatical and unpunctuated sentences have significant influence on readers’ easy reading and comprehension of a news text. Kervin (1992:42) also adds that “clumsy sentence construction and bad grammar can make the most interesting and informative of texts extremely difficult to read and understand.” Though it is stated by journalism scholars that incorrect grammar usage has adverse effect on readability, many of the semi-structured interview participants of the study do not mention it as an influencing element. They said that they did not note the existence of ungrammatical sentences and their influence. For example, Danael, 40, 12+3,a guard at a government office and a lineman in football match says:

I read all the weekly newspaper, but I did not note whether the sentences were grammatical or not, nor their influence in my easy reading and understanding. I thought they are correct.

However, group participants of journalists in particular indicated that they noted that all the stories had problems writing grammatically correct sentences according to the rules of the Amharic language. Sisay says:

Almost all the news writers had common series problems in writing grammatically correct sentences. I lose interest whenever I faced ungrammatical sentences. Ungrammatical sentences can have influence on easy readability. How cans a sentence be clear if its parts are put in an unusual manner? The problem was also that the writers of some news stories did not separate one sentence from another using the appropriate punctuation mark. Similarly, dependent and independent clauses, and lists of items were not separated by the necessary punctuation mark. It is difficult to know where some sentences end.

Abebaw, 55, MA in sports, government employee from another homogenous group also says:

I can say that the writers were not well educated and careful. They used ungrammatical sentences that they always interrupted my focus or attention. They were so careless. They even did not edit errors that could be seen easily.

Most of the responses indicated that ungrammatical sentences structure usage was not a notable problem.

Regarding sentence length, some journalism scholars, for example, Flesch, 1949, Gillman, 1972, and Gunning, 1944 (cited in DuBay, 2004:21-23) underline that sentence length is a key element of readability prediction. In line with sentence length, Harris and Spark (1999:60) state that “sentences must be simple and this usually means they should be short.” However, they point out that “sentences should not be so short because they are staccato to and disjointed: they must read easily.”

The premise is that “the longer a sentence, the higher the hurdle the reader must pass” (Timothy, 1994:2). Phillips (20007:51) adds: “If you have beautiful sentence loaded with three images, it’s going to drag down the whole sentence. You must need one. Pick one. That makes discipline.” Harris and Spark/1999:60/ also indicate, “precise detail has been ruthlessly pared away to focus the readers’ attention on the two facts.”

Thus, a sentence should be short which conveys one idea or closely interrelated ideas (Evans, 2000:10). All participants of the study mentioned that writers of the story put two or more different ideas in one sentence though this didn’t happen in all the sentence of all the newspaper’s stories.

Sahile, for example, mentioned in his group discussion that there were some sentences that were very long because they contained unnecessary and/or unrelated details. So, they were really difficult to read and understand them with interest. This might be writers did not have writing knowledge or skill.

Amanuel, similarly, states:

It is a common scene in all stories that there were sentences that roll on. The writers ran on with on fact after another different fact. The stories looked like a conversation not written ones. They are loose in general.

Speaking to the effect of sentence length in reading and understanding the news stories they read, some participants of the semi-structured and focused group discussion had different view points. Readers, especially, the young readers mentioned that they did not note the adverse impact of sentence length. For example, Habtom, 30,12th complete and a barber, states:

The sentences are not too long to read and understand them. The writers use short sentences though there were some long sentences in some newspapers news stories, which were not difficult for me.

The researcher gave sentences that had 45 to 58 and 3 to 4 words from some stories, together with their edited versions, to those who said sentence lengths were not problems of their easy reading and understanding of the news texts. The purpose of doing so was to check if long and relatively too short sentences do not really affect their ease of reading. He then asked them to tell what the long and short sentences carried. For long sentences, they told different answers. The researcher noted the readers being delayed and challenged to understand the ideas. They were reading again and again to answer the questions. But they could tell similar ideas for the edited versions. Their different answers showed that long sentences had influencing effect on readability. They also indicated that those a-three or four word sentences were difficult to understand because they were incomplete. The researcher then asked if they found similar sentences that were difficult to understand in their earlier reading. All said that they experienced such sentences that were difficult to understand what they were saying. But they indicated that sentence length did not have a big impact as compared to other much more influencing factors.

Journalism scholars have also attested that precision has relation with readability. Thus, sentences need to be focused. Unnecessary and irrelevant details should be avoided. Concerning this, Harris and Spark (1999:65) point out: "Precision helps to avoid the sort of wooly sentences that take no grip on a readers' interest or mind. Make it clear for the reader what happened and where it happened." Phillips (2007:51) underlines the need to avoid 'overdoing writing' He further said: "A few germs light up your prose, but too many and it will look forced and over-elaborate. It is the tiny details that will tell the story." Kervin (1992:49) also puts that every thing you have found out about a person or an event needs to go into an article. Just use the facts that are pertinent to the article." Thus, a sentence must be

direct and snappy. In order to attain such a piece, a writer should have a news story that never contains a sentence which the reader has to look at twice to understand” (Mckane, 2006:105).

Concerning precise sentence usage, the research participants witnessed the impact of unfocused and indirect sentence writing. All participants the semi-structured interview and focus group discussion indicated that this issue was one of the most serious problems that all the news stories had. For example, Eshetu, 53, had BA in Amharic language and literature, Public Relations head at a government organization, says:

The stories were not written directly. The stories were muddy. So, I found them difficult to move through. They used sentences that were not so important. There were also stories that state quite a different matter. So, I started reading a sentence and jumped to other ones without finishing them because they didn't contain the information I need about the story. I continued in search of sentences that carried the most important points of the news. It was also common to get different ideas in a sentence and paragraph.

In General, the above data show that the issues discussed in this category have different level impacts on the readers. Some issues, such as sentence length, imprecise and unfocused sentence usage are common difficulties of readability.

4.1.3. News Stories Structuring: Confusing, Lacked Necessary Information /Details and Difficult to Understand

Structuring of a news story has been found out influencing ease of readability. For example Fry and Sigman (cited in Stone, 1984:10) state that the way writers' structure news stories influence readers' comprehension of news stories.

The journalists group has checked and proved that all the stories of all the newspapers did not have any defined or known writing style. They looked like a talk. The stories were not structured in a journalistic format. Putting the central points of hard news stories in the first sentence or paragraph has been a modern/traditional style of writing. In order to get readers' attention, Gunning, 1944 (cited in Leiter et al, 2000:95) underlines that the first words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs are critical.

Wilber and Miller (2003:29) and McKane (2006:28) similarly emphasize that “readers may move to the next parts of news stories safe if they at least find and know the main points of the stories in the first story/ paragraph.” Leiter, et al, (2000:95) also put: “Any one who has ever written a news story, or read one, will tell you that the most scared words, in any story are the first ones. The opening sentence is what lures the reader into the story. It is what gives the reader the reason for going on with the story.” Thus, the first paragraph of the news is very important. Kervin (1992:47-8) indicates this importance: “It is the hook to pull the reader into the text the introduction is vitally important to pull a reader into the story. So the real sense of the story has to go at the top to pull readers in.”

Thus, the assumption is that writers should express the central point of a news story clearly, simply, directly, precisely and accurately in the beginning of the story part. If so, it can catch readers’ attention, imagination and interest (Harris and Spark, 1999:57).

In this regard, the participants mention that stories were not structured well. For this reason, it was difficult to understand each part of the story in particular and the whole story in general. Teferi, 30, 2nd year MA student of journalism and communication revealed this problem.

After all, the news stories of all the news stories did not have any defined structure. They were shapeless. So, they were discouraging and difficult to understand. I get confused due to unrelated and packed ideas.

So, readers needed the main point first and others following order of their importance. With regard to this, all the participants indicated that they wanted the main points of news stories put in the first paragraph. In this regard, Markos, 39, 12th complete and a businessman says:

I am a businessman. I must move here and there I want read sports newspapers during my little break time. So, I want to get the main matter of the stories immediately and move as much as I need. But the stories were not written in this way. You have to finish the whole text to understand what it is about. For this reason, I get upset and stop reading.

Azeb (female) 42, MA in sports and an expert in a government organization says:

The structure of the news stories are messed up and confusing. I always found them difficult to point out which ones were the main points and the sub-stories of the news. They were perplexing. They were difficult not only for hurried readers like me, but also for those who wanted read to the end.

Clarity of news can be achieved when the news story is developed by the necessary detailed information, So, news writers should explain their stories with important and enough information. Harris and Spark (1999:60). They put the reason for so doing: “Full of details give the reader an exact picture” They (1999:65) further explain that “newspapers often fail to explain enough for the reader who has not read previous reports on the same subject.” Bunton, et al,(1999:20) also underlines that writers should carefully select for those details that will add to the reader’s understanding. All the participants emphatically mentioned that all the stories of the entire sport newspapers understudy lacked the necessary contents. For example, Markos says:

I have never found information as much as I needed. I could get too little information. The most important information was left untold. They are rather full of details that are unrelated and have little importance to the story. As a result I could not understand the news fully.

The participants mentioned that the news stories were loaded by more unnecessary details and information than the wanted ones. They hardly get in most cases the information and the details that they wanted.

In brief, the data showed that the ways the news stories were put and lack of necessary and detail information had significant impact on all readers’ interest to read the stories and understand them easily.

4.1.4. Organization of News stories Contents: Messed up/ Incoherent

All the readers raised content organization as another most significant influencing factor of readability that happened to all stories. It has been noted that a readable news story is characterize by its coherent organization of the news stories. A well-written story is organized in a continuous and readable thread of points. So, the news stories need to be put organized in a readable structure. Readers want parts of

news stories said in the right order without aimlessly digressed far from the main points (Hicks et al, 1999:129). Effective news writing presents news stories that flow logically from one paragraph to the next using good transitions that can move readers through the story with interest and easy understanding (Bowles and Borden, 2000:103).

Thus, parts of a story should have been organized in such a way that readers can be hooked on news stories and may continue reading beyond the opening part-the lead (Leiter, et al, 2000:104). To this effect, They (1999:143) also point out that writers should carefully link each part to the other so that “the whole story precedes in an interesting, informative and logical manner.” They add “the body story should take the readers all through the details of the stories in logical progression, emphasizing the body stories in order to of their descending importance.” Regarding the need to coherent, stories, organization, Leiter, et al, (2000:93) underline: “If a story doesn’t induce the reader to proceed to the next part, then, the piece is dead.” In the interview, Mamush, 24, grade 11 and a shopkeeper, indicated dissatisfaction with the incoherent organization of the whole stories.

There was little or no link between sentences and paragraphs every step you from one sentence to another. The problem was worse at paragraph level. It was discouraging. Each paragraph talked different ideas. They lacked continuation of thought. The writers rumbled the ideas. For this reason I could not answer if you asked me what each story was about.

In similar way, group participants who stopped reading sport newspapers mentioned that the organizations of the news stories were not interesting. They did not have relevant information put in readable manner. They put trash matters as they came to their minds. The stories were not written thoughtfully. Efreem, one of the group participants, stated that he stopped reading sport newspapers some years before. One reason was the incoherent organization. He further says:

They put ideas like a child talk. Small children talk by mixing ideas. They raised many different ideas at a time. Those news writers were almost the same. The writing of the stories all in were monotonous and confusing. Writers insert different ideas here and there.

What may be clear from the above data is that parts of the news bodies should have been organized in coherence having a sense of unity, pace and rhythm so that readers may not be overwhelmed. In this regard Evans (2000:151) indicates that readers lurch through the stories with no clear idea where they are going or what is going on if a text is packed with unrelated and unnecessary details.

On the other hand, Evans (2000:143) explains that news stories that are unnecessarily repetitive and loosely connected collection of stories are confusing, not grabbing and difficult to comprehend. In addition, Harris and Spark (1999:65) discuss that many newspapers repeat a previously reported story. According to them, the danger is that “telling the same issue already told is a death for the newspaper” Participants stated that writers reported the same news stories repeatedly. Abraham says:

They told us the story that they reported some days or months before. They break what they were telling and insert the previous news. They use the phrase ‘As we reported this and that before in our newspaper’. They added nothing new. I think they do this for they didn’t have enough information about the event they report.

The above data indicate that parts of the stories should have a sense of unity, pace and rhythm. This is because readers should not be overwhelmed by messed up and scrambling ideas.

Another important factor for a readable content of a news text is that the news stories need to be tight and fast-paced. Thus, in order to have a clear and a precise news story, writers should include only facts that are needed to make the story complete. This means every available bit of information about the news story should not be included. Concerning this, Leiter, et al, (2000:159) explain: “The effectiveness of the body story doesn’t depend on how much is included. Details alone don’t make for good reading. A writer doesn’t have to dump all of that into the story as if emptying the dust bag.” All participants indicated that the news stories were full of unnecessary information/details. Some members of the journalists group indicated that half at least could reduce all the stories they read. For example, Solomon says:

I have attempted to edit on story from each ten newspapers. I took out words, sentences and paragraphs that had unnecessary, different and repeated ideas. So, I could shorten them by more than a half. This indicates that the writers lacked precise writing.

4.2. Conclusion

According to the data obtained from the two strategies of data collection, the factors indicated above have significant influence to readers in common and partially. Word unfamiliarity, unnecessary repetition, spelling errors and irrelevance and inappropriateness; sentence length (either too long or short), ungrammatical, irrelevance and redundant sentence usage; confusing news stories structure and missing of required information/details; incoherent news contents organization and impreciseness of the whole news writing are the factors that and mostly affect readers' easy reading and understanding of the news stories. However, the data show that some factors of word and sentence difficulties, such as word unfamiliarity, sentence length, and ungrammatical sentence construction, have different level of influence on readers.

The data could also show that the Non-linguistic factors such as, readers linguistic knowledge experience, purpose of reading were potential factors of text readability.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study presents insight into news stories readability by investigating readers/viewpoints perceptions. In order to investigate readers' perception/viewpoints, the study hypothesized that Text readability is subject to readers' perspective. Language structure and usage, news stories structure and news contents organization have influence on readers' easy reading and efficient comprehension

To test the hypotheses, four research questions that are written in chapter one were addressed. Participants were asked to give their overall views/experiences on the readability of the news stories they read. The research addresses readability factors, such as word familiarity, appropriateness, necessity, economy; sentence length and construction and usage, preciseness; news stories structure and availability necessary information and detailed, and coherent news contents organization.

In order to explore readers' point of views and experiences on the issues of the news writing that had potential effect on the news texts readability, the qualitative research strategy has been employed. Thus, the researcher used the traditional techniques of qualitative data: semi-structured and focus group discussion. As it is indicated in chapter three of this study, these techniques allow the researcher to understand that news texts readability need to be examined on the readers' perspectives but not from the outsider's points of view. The researcher has framed the study's discussion on the theories of readability and modern journalism hard news writing trend

With the substantial evidence gathered in the investigation almost all the findings supported nearly the entire hypotheses. Accordingly, the researcher has investigated that the language usage and construction (word and sentence usage and construction); stories structuring, and news contents organization had significantly influenced readers' easy reading and understanding of the news stories that they read at different level of difficulty. The research findings highlight that inappropriate unnecessary and repetitive word usage; loaded, unrelated sentence combination, unnecessary and repetitive sentence usage; undefined and messed up news structure and lack of necessary/relevant details/ information, and incoherent news contents organizations significantly affected all the readers' easy reading and understanding of the news stories they read.

Furthermore, the results of the specific questions asked for each theme show that word unfamiliarity, spelling errors, and ungrammatical sentence constructions, sentence length are not notable influencing factors for few readers understudy. These show that these linguistic elements were not influencing variables for some participant readers.

However, despite some readers did not mention sentence length as a variable during the general question, the researcher has proved in his further investigation that long and chopped down short sentences were found as influencing factors of ease of readability. For example, according to some readability scholars, sentence length that has more than 20 is difficult to read and understand. However, there were sentences having 58 words but not noted by young readers as problems of easy readability. According to Flesch measurement and level of difficulty, readers would have mentioned such sentences. Thus, further studies need to be carried out. The journalists group has measured the average sentence length of the given news stories manually. They reported that sentences length was 25 words at average.

In general, the over all data confirm that the premises that not standardized language usage and construction; poorly structured news stories, lack of necessary and details, and incoherently organized news parts had potential influence on ease readability of news texts, and readers' perspectives have relations with text readability.

On the other hand, the research findings reveal that one of the most basic and important findings are that the assumption that text readability is subject to readers' perspectives. For example, readers' non-linguistic backgrounds, such as readers' experiences and knowledge, and readers' purposes of reading have to do with text readability. For example, those respondents who had good exposure to watch live sport games on satellite sport professionals found to be not having problems in understanding technical and foreign languages on the other hand, those readers who read to get some information out of the whole text and those whose first languages were not Amharic seemed not to have affected by incorrect/ungrammatical language construction.

In sum, it seemed that the news stories were hard to read understand probably the news writers were not adhering to the principles of the conventional hard news reporting: Reporting news in dished-up in a clear, brief, simple, enticing and telling way.

The researcher has, therefore, understood that the assumptions that writers should write a news text that the general readers can easily and quickly read and comprehend was not applied. The results proved that readers want news stories

Appendix

1. Interview guide for the semi-structured Interviewees

1. The researcher introduced him and told the interviewee the aim of his coming to the interviewee.
2. The researcher explained the purpose of the interview; about what was the interview, and asked the interviewees' cooperation for the interview
3. Would you introduce yourself? (Name, age education level and occupation)
4. How did you find the readability of the news stories you read in the local sport newspapers? In other words, were they difficult or easy to read and understand the news stories?
5. What factors were the most important problems that challenged your easy reading and understanding of the news stories? (This is asked if the interviewee said 'difficult' to question 4 above. If they said easy they will be asked why they were easy.)

a/ Questions on word construction and usage issues

6. Were there word construction and usage problems that affected your easy reading and understanding of the news stories?
7. What were the problems in word construction and usage?

The following questions were asked if the respondents didn't mention.

8. Were there ungrammatical words (word errors) that affected your easy reading?
9. Were there inappropriate word usages that affected your reading?
10. Were there unfamiliar words, which you did not know?
11. Were there irrelevant /unnecessary words used that affected your reading?
12. Were the words used able to catch you emotions in describing the sport events?
13. Were there any issues not raised in this interview that you would like to mention?

b/ Questions on sentence construction and usage issues

1. Were there sentence construction and usage problems that affected your easy reading and understanding of the news stories?
2. What were the problems in sentence construction and usage?

The following questions are asked if the respondents didn't mention.

3. Were there ungrammatical sentence (sentence construction errors) that affected your easy reading?
4. Were there sentences that had unnecessary/irrelevant details and thereby affected your ease of reading?
5. Did the lengths of the sentences affect your easy reading and understanding?
6. Were there sentences that are not direct /focused and thereby affected your ease of reading?
7. Were there any issues not raised in this interview that you would like to mention?

c/ Questions on news structure

1. What is your view on the structuring of the news stories?
2. Did how the stories are structured affect your reading?
3. Do you want the main points of the news stories put at the very beginning of the stories and other parts of the stories follow the gist of the stories in order of their importance? If not, which way you want the stories be formed?
4. Were there enough details/ necessary information that are left untold that you needed?

d/ Questions on organization of the news stories contents

1. Was how the news stories contents organized easy or difficult to read and understand?
2. Was each part of the story linked in coherence?
3. Were there unnecessary ideas that didn't have to do with the stories?

Thank you very much for your cooperation and time.

2. Interview guide for the focus group discussion

1. The researcher introduced him and told the members of focus groups his aim of organizing the focus group.
2. The researcher explained the purpose of the focus group discussion, and about what was the subject of the focus group discussion, and thanks the members for their cooperation for the discussion.
3. Would you introduce yourself to the group? (Name, age education level and occupation)
4. How did you find the readability of the news stories you read in the local sport newspapers? In other words, were they difficult or easy to read and understand the news stories?
5. What factors were the most important problems that challenged your easy reading and understanding of the news stories? (This is asked if the members said 'difficult' to question 4 above. If they say easy they will be asked why they are easy.)

a/ Questions on word construction and usage issues

6. Were there word construction and usage problems that affect your easy reading and understanding of the news stories?
7. What were the problems in word construction and usage?

The following questions were asked if the respondents didn't mention.

8. Were there ungrammatical words (word errors) that affected your easy reading?
9. Were there inappropriate word usages that affected your reading?
10. Were there unfamiliar words, which you did not know?
11. Were there irrelevant /unnecessary words used that affected your reading?
12. Were the words used able to catch you emotions in describing the sport events?
13. Were there any issues not raised in this interview that you would like to mention?

b/ Questions on sentence construction and usage issues

1. Were there sentence construction and usage problems that affected your easy reading and understanding of the news stories?
2. What were the problems in sentence construction and usage?

The following questions are asked if the respondents didn't mention.

3. Were there ungrammatical sentence (sentence construction errors) that affected your easy reading?
4. Were there sentences that had unnecessary/irrelevant details and thereby affected your ease of reading?
5. Did the lengths of the sentences affect your easy reading and understanding?
6. Were there sentences that were not direct /focused and thereby affected your ease of reading?
7. Were there any issues not raised in this interview that you would like to mention?

C/ Questions on news structure

1. What is your view on the structuring of the news stories?
2. Did how the stories were structured affect your reading?
3. Do you want the main points of the news stories put at the very beginning of the stories and other parts of the stories follow the gist of the stories in order of their importance? If not, which way you want the stories be formed?
4. Were there enough details/ necessary information that are left untold that you needed?

d/Questions on organization of the news stories contents

1. Was how the news stories contents organized easy or difficult to read and understand?
2. Was each part of the story linked in coherence?
3. Were there unnecessary ideas that didn't have to do with the stories?
4. Was there enough details/ information that is left untold that you needed?
5. Were the news stories writing interesting/ enticing?

Thank you very much for your cooperation and time.

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