

The Use of Clause Relations in Nigerian Television Broadcast Media

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Abstract

This study investigated clause relations in Nigerian Television Broadcast Media. A clause relation is a cognitive process whereby the meaning of a sentence or group of sentences is interpreted in the light of its adjoining sentence to signal appropriate information in texts. They serve to link ideas in media discourse particularly in television broadcast. It aimed at examining the characteristic clause relations used as text creating linguistic features in Media discourse. The corpus consists of eight bulletins from 2 television stations. The method of data analysis was descriptive. A random sampling was used in the collection of data. The findings show that clause relations are significant features of broadcast news report. Specifically, the Logical sequence relations are used in the texts to show the cause of an action. The study recommends that neophytes in the academic discourse community, particularly Media Practitioners and students should be encouraged to learn the proper use of clause relations in speaking and writing.

Keywords: Clause Relation, Television News broadcast, News Bulletins, Logical Sequence Relations

Introduction

A clause relation is the cognitive process whereby the meaning of a sentence or group of sentences is interpreted in the light of its adjoining sentence. Hoey (1983), claims that all systems for signalling relations are rooted in the grammar of the clause; clause and sentence are therefore treated as including a clause. A clause is a group of words which includes a finite verb, it is also grammatically complete and self-contained and forms part of a sentence (Amaechi, 1997 and Fakuade, 2000). Huddleston and Pullum (2005) classify clause into canonical and non-canonical. The canonical clause has the potential to stand alone as a sentence, while non-canonical is derivational, in terms of how they differ from the canonical. According to Thibault (1988), the clause complex relations contribute to the major structural boundaries of the text as social activity. That is, a reader needs a particular item of knowledge as a resource in order to interpret the actions embodied in the discourse as a coherent activity. Winter (1974) views clause relations to hold coherent and semantic relations between sentences that can provide a model for the relations that can exist within a text. The coherence is understood in terms of semantic relations that hold between sentences or group of sentences of the text. The semantic relations between clauses provide a model for the relations that can exist within a text. According to Bloor (1990) readers or listeners make sense of a text by following the conventions between its parts, that is, by looking for macro patterns and clause relations.

Clause Relations are very important linguistic features for the communication of information in text, despite this fact, many writers have problem with the use of clause relations in text creation. Therefore, this study seeks to examine its use in Television broadcast, first to describe their characteristic features in the genre and their appropriateness in expressing opinions and views in media news report, bearing in mind the importance of information to all sectors of the society for the well-being of its citizenry.

Theoretical Framework

Clause Relations are ways by which texts are typically sequenced or parts of a text is interpreted in relation to another (Bloor, 1990). The frame for the study is based on Winter's (1977, 1974) pattern of Clause- Relations into Logical Sequence and Matching Relations. Logical Sequence Relations show successive events or ideas, While Matching Relations are 'matched' against each other in terms of degree of identity of description.

Methodology

This is a corpus based study; the approach to research adopted is descriptive, 8 Television Bulletins spread over a period of 7 months (February to August, 2012) from 2 reputable Media Broadcast (Nigeria Television Authority and TV Gotel, Yola) were randomly collected. Clause Relations were analysed based on Winter's (1974, 1977) pattern of clause relations into logical and matching relations.

The Corpus: The corpus for the study consists of the following articles:

Table 1: Television News Headlines (Corpus) for the Study

TV Station	Date, Month and Year of Broadcast	Television News Headlines
TV Gotel	3 rd August 2012	Police Warns Public Against Use of Tinted Glasses Without Permit
TV Gotel	5 th August 2012	Introduction of Prepaid Meters to Energy Consumers in Nigeria
TV Gotel	7 th August, 2012	Amidst the Crises of Confidence; Nigerians Reject State Police
TV Gotel	9 th August, 2012	Transitional Council Hands Over Power in Libya
NTA Channel 8 News	26 th March, 2012	State Government Screens Pensioners in Preparatory to e-payment
NTA Channel 8 News	2 nd February, 2012	ANPP Governorship Candidate Withdraws from the Race
NTA Channel 8 News	30 th April, 2012	School's Resumption
NTA Channel 8 News	2 nd February, 2012	Count down to February 4 th governorship Election INEC Distributes Sensitive Materials

Results and Discussion

The research sets out to investigate (1) Whether clause relations are a feature of Television Broadcast. (2) To determine the extent to which the use of clause relations are constrained by their context of use.

The analysis goes to show that both logical sequence and matching relations are important linguistic features used in establishing relationship between propositions in Television Broadcast. Both clause relation types are significant in Television Broadcast in this study.

In the news bulletin under study, two clause relation types were identified. They are logical sequence and matching relations.

Logical Sequence Relations

These types of relations involve sentences that describe **Condition-Consequences, Cause-Consequences, Instrument-Achievement Relations, Situation-Condition** and **sometimes hypothetical-Condition**. Examples are given below:

Text 1

The ban on the use of tinted glasses on cars is still in force. This is according to a statement by the Adamawa State Police Command. Therefore, motorists without factory tinted glasses or permits are advised to remove them police warns against use of tinted glasses without permit, (TV Gotel, Page 8, 3rd August, 2012)

The above text is a logical sequence relation which is made up of multiple clauses that give rise to compound complex sentence unit. The last clause “Therefore, motorists without factory tinted glasses or permits are advised to remove them” is a consequence of the cause of the two clauses in the text above as seen thus: “The ban on the use of tinted glasses on cars is still in force. This is according to a statement by the Adamawa State Police Command.” As a result of the ban on motorists not to use tinted glasses and for the fact that it is still in force, is an indication that a stand by the Adamawa State Police Command which has caused an action

that leaves those motorists without factory tinted glasses or permits to remove them. The clauses above create coherence to the writing and broadcast of the News bulletin.

Text 2

The All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) in the State has expelled its former Gubernatorial candidate in the February 4th Governorship election. The state chairman of the party Alhaji Umar Duhu who stated this while briefing news men in Yola said the decision of the former candidate was based on his personal interest and therefore, the party has disassociated itself from the act (ANPP Governorship candidate withdraws from the race, NTA Channel 8 news, page 6, 2nd February, 2012).

The above text is a cause-consequence logical sequence relations. The text shows that the first clause "The All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) in the State has expelled its former Gubernatorial candidate in the February 4th Governorship election" is canonical clause which indicates that the aftermath of the subsequent clauses bring about the action involving the expulsion of the candidate. The cause of the expulsion is therefore seen in the multiple clauses involving dependent and independent: "The State Chairman of the party, Alhaji Umar Duhu who stated while briefing Newsmen in Yola said the decision of the former candidate was based on his personal interest and therefore the party has disassociated itself from the act."

The above multiple clauses show their unification as cause clauses. The use of "who stated" gives more information about the state chairman which in turn serves as the antecedent of the pronoun "who". The adverbial clause "while briefing newsmen" tells when the party chairman made it known to the public that the decision taken by the party's gubernatorial candidate is based on his personal interest and not the interest of the party which also takes another independent clause. "The decision of the former candidate was based on his personal interest". In the last clause, the adverbial "therefore" is used in the signalling process of idea which depicts the decision of party "therefore the party has disassociated itself from the act".

It can therefore be said that cause-consequence is used in news reports as in most texts to show the cause of action. That is, what brought about the exhibition of a particular action is a result of one that precedes and acts on it as in text 2 above.

B. Matching Relations

These are relations that involve clauses that make **contrasts**, **comparisons** and **hypothetical real**. These are shown in the examples below:

Text 3

Libya's National transitional council has handed over power to the General National Congress, the National Assembly in Tripoli marking the country's first peaceful Government since Moammar Gaddafi seized power in 1969 (Transitional Council hands over power in Libya, TV Gote, Page 10, 9th August, 2012).

In the text above, two clauses are combined to form matching relations. The first clause is matched with the second one to create coherence, which form good degree of description. The first clause "Libya's national transitional council has handed over power to the general national congress" clearly spelt out that power has been transferred from "Libya's

National Transitional Council “to” The General National Congress”. The second clause “The National Assembly formed by last month’s elections, in the conference center in Tripoli marking the country’s first peaceful government transition since Moamar Gaddafi seized power in 1969” is a post qualifier of the first clause still discussing the congress and using different nomenclature. It is therefore, still making reference or explanation to the same idea. It is not linked by any lexical item, but a comma is used in the separation of the clauses to allow cohesion.

Text 4

As is the case, prepaid meters are used on the premise that the customer will not be able to get access to electricity but pay the bill in advance before electricity can be used. (Introduction of prepaid meters to energy consumers in Nigeria, TV Gotel, Page 10, 5th August, 2012).

The above text is a matching relations. This is because the idea in the first clause “As is the case prepaid meters are used on the premise that the customer will not be able to get access to electricity” is matched with the second clause “pay the bill in advance before electricity can be used” which is the cause. The two clauses are conjoined by the coordinating conjunction “but” which points the contrasting idea between the two clauses. That is to say that the prepaid meter is an indication that electricity cannot be accessed by customers as pointed out in the first clause unless the bill is paid in advance as clearly stated in the second clause. The two clauses depict a very good example of contrast matching relations to portray textuality in television broadcast.

Text 5

A state police is a type of sub-National Police force where the powers of the police would be restricted to particular state. However, the issue has continued to generate controversy and heated debate among the populace (Amidst the crises of confidence: Nigerians reject state police, TV Gotel, page 8, 7th August, 2012).

The above text is a matching relation; this is because the two clauses identified are made up of first clause “A state police is a type of sub-National police force where the powers of the police could be restricted to a particular state.” This is an independent clause that defines a term. This term is further elaborated in the second clause “However, the issue has continued to generate controversy and heated debate among the populace” which is another independent clause. This relations show how an idea can create a contradiction as indicated in the second clause, but it creates textuality to point at a targeted discourse.

Text 6

The state government has commenced screening of pensioners. The exercise which is taking place at Mahmud Ribadu Square is to last for two weeks (Screening state persioners, NTA Channel 8 News, page 2, 6th March, 2012).

From the above text, it can be deduced that the clauses are compatible. The first clause in the text is an independent clause which tells us about the State government’s commencement of pensioners screening exercise. “The state government has commenced screening of its pensioners.” This clause is better informed by the second clause which gives more information about the exercise “The exercise which is taking place at Mahmud Ribadu Square is to last for two weeks.” The second clause is equally a canonical or independent. It

shares equal status with the first in terms of degree of identity of idea as it gives more information about the first. The verb phrase “commenced screening of its pensioners” is repeated in the second in different lexical items “The exercise” which is also in form of phrase though a noun phrase. The repetition does not only serve to connect the clauses, but also contribute significantly to their interpretation. As can be seen from the first clause above, the repetition of the idea in the second clause using different lexical items act as framework for the interpretation of the two clauses.

Text 7

Some teachers interviewed told NTA News that they have complied with one week resumption date for teachers as directed by the authorities concerned (School’s resumption, NTA channel 8 news, page 6, 30th April, 2012).

The above text is a matching relations that shows relations between two clauses that “match against each other in terms of degree of description. The text is made up of two unequal clauses known as canonical (independent) and they function to create textuality. The first clause “some teachers interviewed told NTA news” is an independent clause that functions as the main carrier of the information that extends to the subordinate clause (noun clause) or dependent clause “that they have complied with one week resumption date for teachers as directed by the authorities concerned”. The two clauses are linked by the subordinate conjunction “that” to give coherence to the discourse.

Text 8

He urged all members of the party to vote for ANPP on the election day saying that his running mate will fly the flag of the party (countdown to February 4th Governorship election INEC distributes sensitive materials, NTA Channel 8 news, page 5, 2nd February, 2012).

The above excerpt points out that a matching relation with a combination of canonical (independent) and non-canonical clause (dependent) are linked by the subordinate conjunction “that”. Though the use of verb “saying” is used as a preamble that introduces what the speaker urges, the first clause “He urged all members of the party to vote for ANPP on the election day saying...” gives the broad message of the speaker with a further explanation or focus message in the second clause thus “that his running mate will fly the flag of the party”. The relation is an indication of coherence in the text of NTA, Yola.

Based on results obtained in this study, it can be said that clause relations are significant features of Television Broadcast, but their use is constrained by the requirement of the bulletins to suggest to the reader, the consequence of an action made by a personality or personalities as seen in logical sequence relations and contrasts, compatibility, etc, in matching relations.

Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this research to show that clause relations are a feature of language in Television Broadcast. Both Logical Sequence and matching relations were found to be in the texts, because it enables Television news broadcasters to show relations between successive events or ideas to the readers. The study recommends that students of mass communication and journalism should constantly be given both speaking and writing tasks involving the use of clause relations in their use of English courses. This will enable them develop the proper use of clause relations as they learn to write. Neophytes in the media

discourse community, particularly media practitioners and students should be encouraged to learn the proper use of clause relations as these signalling items will help them in writing good news reports.

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