

Archive

Language of English Newspapers in India

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Abstract

Discerning readers of India English newspapers often complain that journalists on occasions do not observe basic guidelines to write simple and easy to understand language. The inverted pyramid format of news writing is not preferred by scores of reporters.

This exploratory study is an attempt to find if these grievances are valid. The study was carried out as per the following methods: Respondents (sample size 266) who were predominantly students of graduate schools in Pune and Mumbai were administered a questionnaire containing long intros of ten stories to be compared to a rewritten version of the same intros. 2. The Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level tests from the MS Word 2007 were run through the text of both the versions. 3. The same questionnaire contained twenty 'difficult' words published in English newspapers. The respondents were required to select meaning of each word which he/she thought was correct.

The data indicated that a large number of the readers found the words to be difficult. These readers gave overwhelming preference for simple sentences of fewer words for the intros of the news stories.

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Key words: Brevity, Clear writing, Difficult Words, Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level tests, Fog Index, Intro, Inverted Pyramid, Lead, Newman's English, News Agency, Strain Index, Stylebook, Readability, Simple language, Small sentence

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Introduction:

The Indian newspaper industry has witnessed growth during the last two decades. The country now boasts of a newspaper that is the world's largest broadsheet English daily (*The Times of India*) and the world's second largest financial daily (*The Economic Times*). New English dailies are launched while the existing dailies have been bringing out editions from newer places. However, discerning readers complain that journalists many times ignore the guidelines to write simple and unbiased. The inverted pyramid format of news writing is not preferred by scores of reporters. Most general interest English newspapers claim that their readership comprises of educated young readers. However it would seem that these newspapers do not consider these complaints of the readers as there is no attempt to redress grievances. There are no surveys dealing with the language of the newspapers. The present study is to find if these grievances are true.

This study has roots in the professional work this researcher carried out first as a sub-editor and later reporter of United News of India between 1971 and 1987. UNI is one of the two news agencies disseminating news and features in English. His seniors in the news desk in Delhi corrected the copy of the reporters that came in from over 100 bureaus and scores of stringers all over the country. Under the supervision of these seniors, juniors like this researcher, learned the craft, format, and style of writing for a news agency.

Before joining UNI in Delhi in 1971, he was a sub-editor in a Pune-based provincial newspaper, *Sakaal*, published in Marathi, the language of the province of Maharashtra. As sub-editor in *Sakaal*, his job included translation of the select news that flowed in on the tickers of Press Trust of India, the nation's premier news agency, and from UNI. He was thus aware of the difficulties faced by sub-editors while translating news agency stories for non-English dailies of India. That helped him learn the requirements of a news agency while writing a news story. There were no *rules* to write and edit, but *guidelines* were evolved for the editorial staff to follow. These can be summed up as follows:

1. Use 'inverted pyramid' format to write a story. The most important part of the story will be in the first paragraph. Lesser important details in the second and subsequent paragraphs and the least important would be in the last paragraph.
2. Write simple and easy to understand language so that sub-editors in English language newspapers can understand the text, and publish it for the readers.
3. Use language that can be translated, without any difficulty, by sub-editors of non-English newspapers that subscribed to UNI's news service. They have to translate

the stories in English into the language of that daily, Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil, and so on. The language has to be so simple that these sub-editors can translate the stories easily and quickly even against the pressures of deadlines during the late evenings.

4. Thus, the stories in English should not contain words difficult to understand and difficult to translate. The sentences should be small and simple, preferably without clauses. It has to be kept in mind that complex sentences can confuse the sub-editors, and later the readers.
5. The stories would have to be objective, covering 'both' sides of the event. There will be no personal bias of the reporter in the text.
6. They were expected to avoid adjectives.
7. Unnecessary words were to be eliminated.

Generally, the story would be 'filed' in 'takes' or parts. A reporter would normally write a 'take' of 100 to 120 words and rush it to the sub-editor. It would be useful to send such takes for speedy movement of the story over the wire.

This researcher believes that such reporting style is better because it is easier to understand and is free of reporter's bias. In media schools where he taught later he used to expect the students to follow the writing styles of news agencies for the same reason. His advice used to be that it would be easier for the students to switch over from the style of a news agency to that of a newspaper, but not the other way around.

However, several ex-students confronted him was many times with observations that their senior journalists did not follow these guidelines and 'does and don'ts'. They would show several examples containing difficult words and long intros published in leading English dailies.

That is where the concept of the present study was germinated. Is it true that English newspapers often publish such difficult words and long winding sentences? Or is it bias of this researcher against the new generation of reporters and sub-editors?

The first step of the study was therefore to identify words and sentences *that this researcher thought* would be difficult for the readers to understand.

What is the correct length of a sentence in a news story?

Obviously there cannot be a rigid general rule applicable in all the situations, for all types of stories. However, the senior professional told the juniors: *The shorter the better*.

Sanyal has this guideline for the journalists: ‘...some sub-editors cannot distinguish the wrong and right practice in newspaper work. The rule is: NEVER make an intro verbose- ***let it not exceed 25 words***. Do not try to pack secondary details into an intro. (Sanyal, 1996, p. 66)

Similarly, Oxford Guide to Plain English, by Martin Cutts, raised an identical question: What length of a sentence is too long? Ignore advice that prescribes an upper limit, though if you regularly exceed 40 words you will certainly weary your readers. Better to aim for an average of 15-20 words throughout. The key word is *average*, so not all sentences need to be in this range; there should be plenty of variety. (Martin, 2005, p. 19)

He argued that one reason for keeping to a 15-20 word average is that people are used to it. He quoted findings of a study carried out in mid-1960s. It had analysed a million words of published US writing. The average length was 19.

This researcher and his peers in academics in India teach journalism students the Ten Principles of Clear Writing enunciated by Robert Gunning as follows:

Keep Sentences Short.

Prefer the Simple to the Complex.

Develop Your Vocabulary.

Avoid Unneeded Words.

Put Action Into Your Verbs.

Use Terms Your Reader Can Picture.

Tie In With Your Reader’s Experience.

Write the Way You Talk.

Make Full Use of Variety.

Write To Express, Not To Impress.

(Robert, 1973)

Years later, it was suggested that the news agencies in the West, notably in the USA, had a guideline on readability on the following lines:

	Average sentence length	Readability
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1	8 words or less	Very easy to read
2	11 words	Easy to read
3	14 words	Fairly easy to read
4	17 words	Standard
5	21 words	Fairly difficult to read
6	25 words	Difficult to read
7	29 words or more	Very difficult to read

(Jyoti, 2007)

There have been several linguists who have been concerned over readability. Sir Ernest Gowers (*The Complete Plain Words*), Martin Cutts (*Oxford Guide to Plain English*), Thomas S. Kane (*The New Oxford Guide To Writing*), William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White (*The Elements Of Style*) and several others have proposed various formulae to test readability and how to write simple English. These included Watson (Nirmaladasan) of India who offered the Strain Index. (Solomon, 2006) U.S. government agencies use the Flesch Reading Ease Readability Formula as their standard readability formula. It's so popular that Microsoft Word, Google Docs and other writing apps can calculate readability based on the Flesch formula for the user. (Alexander, 2008)

The present researcher studied the topics from the readers' perspective on the language of English newspapers in India.

Methodology:

He divided the research topics in two sections as follows: a. Study on 'Long Intros' of news stories and b. Study on 'Difficult Words' used in the newspapers.

- a. The study on 'Long Intros' was covered in two steps:

One. Readability Tests: Tests were carried out using formulae for the Flesch Reading Ease Test and Flesch Kinkaid Grade level Test provided by MS Word after the Spell checker and Grammar Checker are run through the selected text.

Two. Questionnaire-based survey to find if readers find it easier to understand the text of news stories when written with simplicity, brevity and objectivity

- b. The study on 'Difficult Words' was through a **questionnaire-based survey to ascertain** if readers find it difficult to understand words journalists often use in news stories

About the Readability Tests:

Each readability test bases its rating on the average number of syllables per word and words per sentence.

Flesch Reading Ease test

This test rates text on a 100-point scale. The higher the score, the easier it is to understand the document. For most standard files, the score is expected to be between 60 and 70.

The formula for the Flesch Reading Ease score is:

$$206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{ASL}) - (84.6 \times \text{ASW})$$

where:

ASL = average sentence length (the number of words divided by the number of sentences)

ASW = average number of syllables per word (the number of syllables divided by the number of words)

The result is a number between 0 and 100. The higher the number, the easier the text is to read.

The importance and utility of the Flesch Reading Ease Index can be understood from the scores of some popular publications. For example, *Reader's Digest* has a readability index of about 65, *Time* scores about 52, and the *Harvard Law Review* scores in the low 30s. (Alexander, 2008)

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test

This test rates text on a U.S. school grade level. For example, a score of 8.0 means that an eighth grader can understand the document. For most documents, one is expected to aim for a score of approximately 7.0 to 8.0.

The formula for the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score is:

$$(.39 \times \text{ASL}) + (11.8 \times \text{ASW}) - 15.59$$

where:

ASL = average sentence length (the number of words divided by the number of sentences)

ASW = average number of syllables per word (the number of syllables divided by the number of words)

(Word, 2007)

Field Study

Initial preparation of the study was carried out to formulate a questionnaire that would include questions on Difficult Words and also on Long Intros. This preparation has been detailed in the relevant sections of the study on pages 9-10 and 17-18.

The sample was purposive and convenience. The respondents were asked if they read English newspapers regularly. If they answered in affirmative, they were requested to fill in the eight page questionnaire.

Sample size: 266. The respondents were post graduate students.

Period of the survey: From April 02 to May 08, 2010

The study was carried out among the students, who are readers of English newspapers, in the following locations:

1. Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Mumbai, Mumbai
2. Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Pune, Pune
3. Department of Communication Studies, University of Pune, Pune
4. Department of English, University of Pune, Pune
5. Department of Management Science, University of Pune, Pune
6. FLAME School of Communication, Pune

General profile of the respondents: Most respondents were students in post-graduate departments in public-funded University of Pune and University of Mumbai, a privately-funded autonomous institute in Pune. on their native places, mother tongue and social/economic background was not sought. However, it can be broadly inferred from their association with these institutes that the students belonged to different states of India, had a varied social and economic family background and they belonged to urban and rural places. They had different languages as mother tongue. Similarly, the respondents had different media of instruction during their higher secondary school education and graduation studies.

The respondents read the following newspapers: *The Times of India* (214), *Pune/Mumbai Mirror* (80), *The Indian Express* (62), *The Hindu* (20), *The Hindustan Times* (40). There were respondents who read other dailies but these are not included in the list here because the numbers were insignificant. The figures in the bracket will add up more than 266 of the respondents because some readers read more than one newspapers.

Method to study readers' responses to 'Long Intros'

The researcher selected intros or leads of news stories published in *The Times of India*, *The Indian Express*, the *DNA*, *The Hindustan Times* and *The Hindu* between March 01, 2010 and April 08, 2010. The only criterion for selection of a lead was that it consisted **of only one sentence**; and such a sentence had **more than 25 words**. A total of 50 such lead sentences were selected. Of these, ten lead sentences were identified to be included for the study, on the basis of the length and composition of each of these. These had, as per the researcher's opinion, defects on the lines enlisted by veteran Indian journalist Jyoti Sanyal in the *Write It Right, The Statesman Stylebook*, a major work for the editorial staff of the newspaper published from Kolkatta and New Delhi. He has listed the defects in intros as follows:

- The story begins with attribution
- The story begins with a comment, rather than with a key point
- It has inability to lead the reader straight to the story
- It begins with a subsidiary clause, instead of the key point as the main clause
- It begins with a participle
- It begins with details that push the news away from the opening
- It is convoluted or overloaded sentence instead of being as brief and simple as possible. (Sanyal, 1996, pp. 61-88)

Why only intro, and not the complete news story?

It would have perhaps been useful to include full text of a story for this study. However, only the intros were selected because

1. An intro is considered most important part of the story. It attracts the attention of the readers to the story and leads them into the remaining text of the news. It provides answers to most of the questions: 5 Ws and One H. (What, Who, Where, When, Why and How.)
2. An ideal intro helps the sub-editor write a headline to the story and decide where to place the story in the pages of the daily.
3. Such an intro helps the reader get the gist of the story quickly and switch over to the other items in the daily if he/she is not interested in the details.
4. It would have been difficult to include the entire text of all the selected stories in a limited space of a questionnaire and limited time for the respondent to fill in.

Procedure to prepare the questions for this section:

The researcher typed each of the selected ten intros in an MS Word document as a column of a two-column table. He rewrote the intro in the second column of the table without changing the essential details. He utilised the news writing skill and experience in journalism for the news writing and the rewrites.

The intros were rewritten by

- i. Removing words that were unwanted in the first sentence of the story
- ii. Splitting the single sentence intro into two or more sentences
- iii. Changing the intro by removing the comments, speculation, and bias of the reporter
- iv. Making the sentence brief, simple, and by removing the less important details. This led to bringing the main clause into the focus. Less important details were left out for second or subsequent sentences.
- v. Removing participles or subsidiary causes

Thus, there were 10 original intros and 10 rewritten intros. These were marked as ‘Version One’ and ‘Version Two’ intros without identifying which one of these was original from the newspapers. They were placed into two columns of a table as Version One and Version Two of a questionnaire to be filled in by regular readers of English newspapers. Respondents were thus not aware about which column had the rewritten or original intros. The respondents were expected to read the text of both the versions and tick mark which version was easier and quicker for him/her to understand.

The questionnaire, which also had a section on difficult words, was pretested and pilot-studied, as stated on page numbers 17-18 of this paper.

These questionnaires were administered to readers of English newspapers in three cities, Pune and Mumbai. The sample was convenience and purposive. (Please refer to page 8).

Outcome of the Readability Tests:

The text of the Version One and Version Two of each of the ten intros was spell-checked and grammar-checked in MS Word. Each version was subjected to the following readability tests

1. Flesch Reading Ease, and
2. Flesch Kinkaid Grade level available in MS Word as an utility in Spell checking and Grammar Checking.

The results of the check were recorded in tables as follows:

(01 A) That there is no let-up in the anti-India campaign of Pakistan's ISI has been established once again, with the two Mumbai youth allegedly working on a plot to attack Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, offshore installations of the Oil and National Gas Corporation and other targets in the city-fuel storage tanks, a shopping mall and a cloth market.

(01 B) Two Mumbai youth were today arrested allegedly for plotting to attack important installations in the city. These included Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, offshore installations of the Oil and National Gas Corporation and other targets in the city-fuel storage tanks, a shopping mall and a cloth market. This has once again established that Pakistan's ISI has continued its anti-India campaign without any let up.

	Words	Characters	Para graphs	Sentences	Average sentence per paragraph	Average words per sentence	Average Characters per word	Passive sentences Per cent	Flesch Reading Ease	Flesch Kinkaid Grade level
1A	57	289	1	1	1	57	5	0	6.4	26.5
1B	63	349	1	3	3	21	5.4	33	29.7	14.3

(02 A) Nine jawans of the anti-Maoist Special Operation Group (SOG) were killed and eight others seriously injured in a landmine blast triggered by Maoists in Koraput district of Orissa on Sunday morning. This was perceived as Maoist giving a bloody nose to the security forces engaged in flushing out Maoists in Orissa.

(02 B) Giving a bloody nose to the security forces engaged in flushing out Maoists in Orissa which has launched 'Operation Green Hunt', the red rebels on Sunday triggered a landmine explosion killing at least nine jawans and seriously injuring eight others in Korapur district.

	Words	Characters	Para graphs	Sentences	Average sentence per paragraph	Average words per sentence	Average Characters per word	Passive sentences Per cent	Flesch Reading Ease	Flesch Kinkaid Grade level
2A	51	263	1	2	2	25.5	5	100	38.2	14.2
2B	43	228	1	1	1	43	5.2	0	19.2	21.2

(03 A) Former Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik divorced his first wife Ayesha Siddiqui on Wednesday, ahead of his planned marriage to Indian tennis star Sania Mirza. With this, he seemed to have saved himself from a legal mess that was beginning to threaten his wedding plans and also perhaps from a jail term. In the process, he had submitted to the Siddiqui family that had insisted the Malik was already married to Ayesha.

(03 B) Shoaib Malik on Wednesday saved himself from a legal mess that was beginning to threaten his wedding plans and also perhaps from a jail term by submitting to the Siddiqui family of Hyderabad who insisted that the former Pakistani skipper was already married to Ayesha or Maha Siddiqui.

	Words	Characters	Para graphs	Sentences	Average sentence per paragraph	Average words per sentence	Average Characters per word	Passive sentences Per cent	Flesch Reading Ease	Flesch Kinkaid Grade level
3A	71	345	1	3	3	23.6	4.7	0	44.5	12.9
3B	48	238	1	1	1	48	4.9	0	10	23.7

(04 A) In a landmark judgement in a Haryana honour killing case, a court in Karnal on Tuesday awarded capital punishment to five persons and life sentence to one for murdering a couple on the diktats of a self-styled community panchayat for marrying against societal norms.

(04 B) In a historic judgment, a sessions court here today pronounced death sentence for five men accused of kidnapping and killing a young couple in February, 2007. The couple was murdered on the orders of a community panchayat that disapproved marriage of the couple against social norms.

	Words	Characters	Para graphs	Sentences	Average sentence per paragraph	Average words per sentence	Average Characters per word	Passive sentences Per cent	Flesch Reading Ease	Flesch Kinkaid Grade level
4A	44	223	1	1	1	44	5	0	17.9	21.6
4B	46	238	1	2	2	23	5.1	50	38.1	13.6

(05 A) Pakistan's National Accountability Bureau today asked Switzerland to reopen a money laundering case against President Asif Ali Zardari. The NAB took the unprecedented step after the Pakistan supreme court threatened to imprison the Bureau's chief unless it moved to reopen the case. The developments could trigger another face-off between Pakistan's judiciary and the government.

(05 B) In what could trigger another face-off between Pakistan's judiciary and the government, the country's National Accountability Bureau has asked Switzerland to reopen a money laundering case against President Asif Ali Zardari, a day after the country's supreme court threatened to imprison the anti-corruption agency's head unless it moved to reopen the case.

	Words	Characters	Para graphs	Sentences	Average sentence per paragraph	Average words per sentence	Average Characters per word	Passive sentences Per cent	Flesch Reading Ease	Flesch Kinkaid Grade level
5A	54	326	1	3	3	18	5.9	0	16.2	15.4
5B	52	306	1	1	1	52	5.8	0	0	28

(06 A) With suspicions growing of the involvement of missionaries in trafficking innocent tribal children, a majority of them minor girls, from the north-east to southern states, the Supreme Court has ordered a probe.

(06 B) The Supreme Court today ordered a probe into the apprehensions that missionaries were involved in trafficking tribal children from north-east to southern states. Majority children were minor girls.

	Words	Characters	Para graphs	Sentences	Average sentence per paragraph	Average words per sentence	Average Characters per word	Passive sentences Per cent	Flesch Reading Ease	Flesch Kinkaid Grade level
6A	32	179	1	1	1	32	5.4	0	28.9	17.1
6B	28	170	1	2	2	14	6	0	41.5	10.9

(07 A) The Central government today froze bank accounts of an absconding IM operative Mohsin Ismail Chowdhary who is suspected to be involved in the Pune blast. This followed the investigators' trail to his accounts at the Nana Peth branch of Ratnakar Bank in Pune. Investigations so far indicated that Let-IM were involved in the blast.

(07 B) With the Pune blast probe throwing up definite footprints of the LeT-IM combine, the Centre has frozen accounts of an absconding IM operative Mohsin Ismail Chowdhary after the trail led investigators to his accounts at the Nana Peth branch of Ratnakar Bank in Pune.

	Words	Characters	Para graphs	Sentences	Average sentence per paragraph	Average words per sentence	Average Characters per word	Passive sentences Per cent	Flesch Reading Ease	Flesch Kinkaid Grade level
7A	54	277	1	3	3	18	5	33	49.1	10.8
7B	44	222	1	1	1	44	5	0	25.6	20.6

(08 A) The All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union (AAPSU) has called for a joint action of the Central and State government against Naga militants. Presence of the militants in Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh was a serious problem not only for this state but for the entire nation, the Union has said.

The AAPSU submitted a memorandum to Union Home Minister P Chidambaram during his recent visit to the state listing its demands. It insisted that the extra-territorial and anti-national activities could be stopped only if the Central and State governments took action jointly against the militants.

(08 B) Drawing attention of Union Home Minister P Chidambaram towards the presence of Naga militants in Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh, the All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union termed it as a serious problem not only for this strategic frontier State but also for the entire nation. The NSCN's 'extra-territorial activities' can only be contained and their anti-national activities can be stopped if the Central and State Governments come together and take concerted action against them, the AAPSU said in a memorandum to Chidambaram during his recent visit to the State.

	Words	Characters	Para graphs	Sentences	Average sentence per paragraph	Average words per sentence	Average Characters per word	Passive sentences Per cent	Flesch Reading Ease	Flesch Kinkaid Grade level
8A	97	513	1	4	4	24.2	5.2	0	32.2	14.7
8B	91	494	1	2	2	45.5	5.3	0	6.3	23.6

(09 A) The Karnataka Crime Investigation Department (CID) on Monday seized documents from the Ashram of sex scandal-tainted self-proclaimed godman Nithyananda. Several documents were seized during the day long raid conducted at the Nithyananda Dhyanapectam ashram at Kallugopahalli in the Bidadi taluk of Ramanagara district. The godman is now on the run.

(09 B) Acting stealthily, the Karnataka Crime Investigation Department (CID) on Monday conducted raids at the Nithyananda Dhyanapectam ashram of sex scandal-tainted self-proclaimed godman Nithyananda, now on the run, and searched the premises before seizing documents. The day-long operation yielded several documents, including registers, that were

recovered from the headquarters of the cult organisation located at Kallugopahalli in the Bidadi taluk of Ramanagara district.

	Words	Characters	Para graphs	Sentences	Average sentence per paragraph	Average words per sentence	Average Characters per word	Passive sentences Per cent	Flesch Reading Ease	Flesch Kinkaid Grade level
9A	50	299	1	3	3	16.6	5.8	33	20.7	14.5
9B	62	408	1	2	2	31	6.4	50	0.0	22.1

(10 A) The Congress (I) president Sonia Gandhi announced here today that her party would begin selecting candidates for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections from tomorrow. She made the announcement while addressing a general body meeting of the party. She said the party would field younger candidates for the next Lok Sabha in larger number than ever before. Women, too, would be given priority.

(10 B) The Congress (I) will field more young candidates and women than ever before for the next Lok Sabha elections. This was announced by party president Sonia Gandhi while addressing its general body meeting. The selection process would begin tomorrow.

	Words	Characters	Para graphs	Sentences	Average sentence per paragraph	Average words per sentence	Average Characters per word	Passive sentences Per cent	Flesch Reading Ease	Flesch Kinkaid Grade level
10A	62	327	1	4	4	15.5	5.1	25	45	10.8
10B	39	210	1	3	3	13	5.2	33	48.3	9.7

Results of the Readability Tests

In the 'Version' column in table 1 on the next page, 'Rewritten' indicates that the passage was rewritten by the researcher for simplicity, brevity, and objectivity. The blank cells in this column indicate that the passage contained intros of the story as published in the newspapers.

Continued..

Table no. 1: Results of the Readability Tests

Version no.	Version (Original or Rewritten)	Flesch Reading Ease	Flesch Kinkaid Grade level
1 A		6.4	26.5
1 B	Rewritten	29.7	14.3
2A	Rewritten	38.2	14.2
2B		19.2	21.2
3A	Rewritten	44.5	12.9
3B		10	23.7
4A		17.9	21.6
4B	Rewritten	38.1	13.6
5A	Rewritten	16.2	15.4
5B		0	28
6A		28.9	17.1
6B	Rewritten	41.5	10.9
7A	Rewritten	49.1	10.8
7B		25.6	20.6
8A	Rewritten	32.2	14.7
8B		6.3	23.6
9A	Rewritten	20.7	14.5
9B		0.0	22.1
10A		45	10.8
10B	Rewritten	48.3	9.7

The questionnaire was administered among the respondents who have been reading English newspapers for a number of years.

As can be seen from the table no. 1, the rewritten intros of all the ten passages showed better readability under the **Flesch Reading Ease** and **also in Flesch Kinkaid Grade level** in the compared to the figures for the original intros as published in the newspapers. It can be thus surmised that readers will understand the intros easily and quickly if these do not have defects enumerated by (Sanyal, 1996).

Analysis of field data on 'Long Intros'

Table No. 2 N= Total Number of reader respondents = 266

Sr. No. of passage	Easier Version	Number of respondents who found it easier	Valid percentage
One	I B	218	82
Two	2 A	196	74
Three	3 A	171	64
Four	4 B	165	62
Five	5 A	176	66
Six	6 B	195	73
Seven	7 A	184	69
Eight	8 A	180	68
Nine	9 A	210	79
Ten	10 B	148	56

The readers were asked to select the version that was easier and quicker to understand. The data in table 2 above showed that most readers found the rewritten version to be easier compared to the original intros of the news stories appeared in the newspapers.

Data in table no. 2 thus corroborated with the findings of the Readability tests in table 1.

Recommendations: On the basis of the results of these studies, it can be recommended

- i. The intro should not have unwanted words.
- ii. A long single sentence in the intro should be split into two or more sentences.
- iii. Comments, speculation and bias of the reporter should be removed from the intro.
- iv. The intro sentence should be brief, simple and without less important details which can be used in subsequent sentences of the story.
- v. Participles and/or subsidiary clauses should be removed from the intro.

Study on ‘Difficult Words’:

The other part of the study was to test the assumption that journalists of Indian English newspapers often write words that are difficult for common readers to understand.

How do we define what is a difficult word? This is a very difficult question to answer. This is a subjective issue. There have been numerous studies on readability, but the present researcher chose to evolve a method in an unorthodox manner. He interacted with readers of English newspapers known to him. All of them were at post-graduate students.

Defining ‘Difficult Word’

This researcher adopted the following procedure: He would identify from a copy of the day’s newspaper a word that *appeared to him* as difficult and asked a known person if he/she could tell him its meaning. If the reader could not, that word was listed. The researcher would then read the sentence that included the word. The reader was encouraged to make an attempt to tell him the meaning of the word from the context. The reader would make a guess and offer possible meaning of the word. This was jotted down. The process was repeated with other readers who approached the researcher during day.

The exercise was carried out almost daily in media schools and other places visited by the researcher during February and March 2010. He would pick up words from copies of *The Times of India*, *The Hindu*, *The Indian Express*, and *The DNA* which are available in Pune. A list of words with meanings suggested by these readers was thus compiled. The researcher set up a blog, <http://newsmansenglish.blogspot.com>, on March 16 to discuss English of Indian Newsmen. The initial posts of the blog contained the words compiled as explained above. The researcher mailed an appeal to his acquaintances to visit the blog and send him words that they found to be difficult. The only criterion was that the word must have been picked up from news published in Indian English dailies available in Pune or elsewhere in India.

The acquaintances were chosen from researcher’s Gmail address book. About 25 acquaintances responded to the appeal. The following words they considered difficult were mailed to him:

1. Huddle 2. Ensconce 3. Protégé 4. Pogrom 5. Avant-garde 6. Emanate 7. Conundrum 8. Red herrings 9. Potpourrie 10. Raison D'etre 11. Gargantuan 12. Quagmire 13. Inferno 14. Man Friday 15. Dark Horse 16. Hustings 17. Trojan Horse 18. Keep fingers crossed 19. Juggernaut 20. Hunk 21. Followed suit 22. Evinced 23. Incarcerate 24. Conflagration 25. Furore 26. dishevelled 27. Cuss word 28. Racial slur 29. Cliché 30. Extradition 31. En bloc 32. Inter alia 33. Sic 34. Vis-à-vis 35. Ad hoc 36. Capital punishment 37. Dilemma 38. Kerfuffle 39. Endeavour 40. Incarcerate 41. Ex-officio 42. Furore 43. Spin doctor 44. Inebriated 45. Raised hackles 46. Hoipolloi

The researcher selected 20 of these 46 words that appeared in the newspapers more than at least once during the period. For exclusion of the remaining 25 words, he used his discretion based on his experience in news writing. Some words were not considered because they did not appear in the newspapers quite often.

Thus, each of these selected words was included in the questionnaire. Three meanings offered by the acquaintances for a word were placed against it in the questionnaire for pre-testing by students of FLAME School of Communication in Pune. It was revised using suggestions that came up during the pre-test. A pilot study was carried out in which six acquaintances participated. The final list of the words, evolved as explained above, was included in the questionnaire. This questionnaire had another section which dealt with 'long intros'.

Analysis of data on Meanings of the Difficult Words

Table No. 3 N= Total Number of reader respondents= 266

Word	How many gave the correct meaning	How Many did not (including those who did not answer)
Ad hoc	99	167
Capital Punishment	152	114
Cliché	174	92
Dilemma	171	95
Emanate	134	132
Endeavour	194	72
Evince	77	189
Ex-officio	91	175
Hustings	56	210
Inebriated	116	150
Inferno	114	152
Juggernaut	53	213
Man Friday	86	180
Potpourri	129	137
Protégé	113	153
Raise hackles	103	163
Red Herrings	78	188
Spin doctor	129	137
Trojan Horse	168	98

The data in table no. 3 shows that a large number of respondents could not write the correct meaning of all the 20 words included in the questionnaire. The table shows that not a single word was understood by *all the 266* respondents.

In this study, it was not important how many respondents gave the correct meanings. It is more important to know that a large number of respondents did not understand the words commonly used by the newspapers. These included words such as ad hoc (167 of the 266 did not understand), evince (189), emanate (132), ex-officio (175), hustings (210) or inebriated (150).

This revelation is important because the respondents were students of Masters' courses in Communication, Journalism, Management Science, and English. They have English as medium of instruction. Can it be inferred then that readers with lower academic qualification will find such words more difficult?

Conclusion:

The study was undertaken to test the assumption that English newspapers often use difficult words and long intros. The assumption was based on the grievance of some discerning readers that many times the language of the newspapers was not easy to understand. The readers have to read the intros second time to understand the meaning.

The study was, however, limited to the language of a few newspapers available in Pune and Mumbai. It was limited to a period of only two months. Respondents were students of Master's courses in Communication and Journalism, Management Science and English language.

Such readership studies need to be carried out on a larger scale in terms of number of newspapers, population of readers that would cover a wider profile of readership in different locations of in India.

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