CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Having interpreted the findings of the study from a wider perspective in the previous chapter, this chapter concludes with the overall results of the study. The conclusions are derived logically after analysing the fulfilment of the research objectives and interpreting the study’s findings in view of the results of the previous studies and relevant theoretical frameworks. The conclusion integrates the findings to synthesise the relevant implications and generate useful recommendations for further researches. This chapter summarises the whole results of the research study.

The present study is conducted to analyse the in-depth structure of the newspaper editorials of the English national dailies of India. An editorial, also known as a ‘leader’ influences people, and sometimes causes people also to take action on an issue. Editorials present an evaluation of the situation with “advance pragmatic conclusions in the form of expectations, recommendations, advice, and warnings” (van Dijk, 1992, as cited in Izadi & Saghaeye-Biria, 2007). Owing to its valuable importance and pivotal role that promotes critical thinking and public opinion formation, the study is conducted to explore the structure and efficacy of newspaper editorials.

According to communication theorist, David Berlo (1960), the communication ‘message’ comprises of three main components: (i) the message code (ii) the message content and (iii) the message treatment. Taking into consideration newspaper editorials as Berlo’s ‘message’, an in-depth content analysis is conducted to categorise each newspaper editorial on the basis of its code, content and treatment. The code, in the study is depicted by the writing style, the content by the subject theme and the treatment by the tone of presentation of the editorials. Each editorial, on the basis of the content analysis comes up with a specific writing style (code), subject theme (content) and tone (treatment).
The study also incorporated another aspect of research – the readability of newspaper editorial. If newspaper editorials are so important, are they really understandable and easily comprehensible for its readers? This is the primary issue regarding the present study. The concept of measuring readability is inculcated along with the content analysis methodology to analyse the diverse trends in the readability of newspaper editorials. The study emphasizes on the textual and linguistic characteristics of written material as the main determinants of readability. Using one of the most popular readability indexes, Flesch Reading Ease Score formula, it is observed that the newspaper editorials of English national dailies of India are hard to read.

Analysing the in-depth structure through content analysis the newspaper editorials provide interesting insights regarding the preferred style of presentation of the editorials by editors and the linguistic characteristics of the editorials text. On the other hand, measuring the readability of each editorial gives us an idea of how readable a specific writing style, subject theme or tone of presentation is. In other words, the study provides us an opportunity to know the comparative readability scores of different types of newspaper editorials categorized by virtue of its writing style, subject theme and tone.

On the basis of the findings and the in-depth interpretation, the study comes up with various conclusions. The present chapter highlights the conclusions derived from the study, its implications and suggestions and recommendations for future study.

1. Conclusions

The following conclusions are derived on the basis of the findings and detailed interpretations of the study:

1.1 Conclusion with Regard to Categories of Newspaper Editorials

- Newspaper editorials can be categorised into various types on the basis of its writing style, subject theme and tone of presentation.

- On the basis of its writing style, newspaper editorials can be classified into:
1. Descriptive editorials
2. Interpretative editorials
3. Persuasive editorials

- On the basis of its subject theme, newspaper editorials can be classified into:
  1. Business & economy editorials
  2. Crime/police/law & order editorials
  3. Entertainment editorials
  4. Politics editorials
  5. Science & technology editorials
  6. Social development editorials
  7. Sports editorials
  8. Miscellaneous editorials

- On the basis of its tone of presentation, newspaper editorials can be classified into:
  1. Argumentative editorials
  2. Didactic editorials
  3. Joy/appreciation/praise editorials
  4. Satirical editorials
  5. Sorrow/sadness/disappointment editorials
  6. Suggestive editorials

- Each newspaper editorial can be considered as David Berlo’s ‘message’ (as described in his SMCR model) having three components – code, content and treatment where code depicts writing style, subject theme depicts content and tone depicts treatment of the newspaper editorial.

1.2 Conclusion with Regard to Readability of Newspaper Editorials

- The newspaper editorials of English national dailies of India are hard to read (difficult to understand).
• The newspaper editorials are written at '13th to 16th' educational grade level which falls under the 'difficult to read' category in Flesch Reading Ease Score chart.

• Newspaper editorials are not suitable to read for its readers as they are written at a language which is difficult to understand for an adult of average reading ability.

1.3 Conclusion with Regard to Newspaper Circulation and Readability

• The circulation of newspaper is not directly related to the readability level of the newspaper editorial.

• Highly circulating newspapers do not necessarily possess highly readable editorials.

• Circulation is not a predictor of textual readability of newspaper editorials.

1.4 Conclusion with Regard to Popularity and Readability of Newspaper Editorials based on the Writing Style

• Newspaper editorials with interpretative style of writing are the most popular (most preferred) form of newspaper editorials based on the writing style.

• Newspaper editorials with persuasive style of writing are the least popular (least preferred) form of newspaper editorials based on the writing style.

• Newspaper editorials with descriptive style of writing are the most readable editorials based on the writing style.

• Newspaper editorials with persuasive style of writing are the least readable editorials based on the writing style.

• The most popular form of newspaper editorials based on the writing style does not have the highest readability score within the category.

• There is no direct correlation between popularity and readability of newspaper editorials based on the writing style.
1.5 Conclusion with Regard to Popularity and Readability of Newspaper Editorials based on the Subject Theme

- Newspaper editorials with politics subject theme are the most popular (most preferred) form of newspaper editorials based on the subject theme.

- Newspaper editorials with entertainment subject theme are the least popular (least preferred) form of newspaper editorials based on the subject theme (exclusive of miscellaneous subject theme).

- Newspaper editorials with social development subject theme are the most readable editorials based on the subject theme (exclusive of miscellaneous subject theme).

- Newspaper editorials with science & technology subject theme are the least readable editorials based on the subject theme.

- The most popular form of newspaper editorials based on the subject theme does not have the highest readability score within the category.

- Subject theme of a particular newspaper editorial affects the readability of the editorial in a specific way.

- Newspaper editorials based on lighter subject themes and issues are more readable than editorials based on serious issues.

- There is no direct correlation between popularity and readability of newspaper editorials based on the subject theme.

1.6 Conclusion with Regard to Popularity and Readability of Newspaper Editorials based on the Tone of Presentation

- Newspaper editorials with suggestive tone are the most popular (most preferred) form of newspaper editorials based on the tone of presentation.
• Newspaper editorials with sorrow/sadness/disappointment are the least popular (least preferred) form of newspaper editorials based on the tone of presentation.

• Newspaper editorials with satirical tone are the most readable editorials based on the tone of presentation.

• Newspaper editorials with suggestive tone are the least readable editorials based on the tone of presentation.

• The most popular form of newspaper editorials based on the tone of presentation has the least readability score within the category.

1.7 Conclusion with Regard to Popularity and Readability of Newspaper Editorials with Combined Parameters of Specific Writing Style, Subject Theme and Tone

• There are 52 different and possible combinations of newspaper editorials with combined parameters of specific writing style, subject theme and tone.

• Interpretative editorials with politics subject theme and suggestive tone of presentation are the most popular (most preferred) form of newspaper editorials with specific combination of writing style, subject theme and tone.

• In terms of the least popular form of newspaper editorials with specific combination of code, content and treatment, there are 33 such editorials with 33 possible combinations of writing style, subject theme and tone.

• Descriptive editorials with politics subject theme and satirical tone are the most readable newspaper editorials with specific combination of writing style, subject theme and tone.

• Persuasive editorials with science and technology subject theme and didactic tone are the least readable editorials with specific combination of writing style, subject theme and tone.
• The most popular (most preferred) form of editorial with specific combination of writing style, subject theme and tone employed by highly circulating newspapers has low readability levels.

• There is no direct correlation between popularity and readability of newspaper editorials with specific combination of writing style, subject theme and tone.

1.8 Conclusion with Regard to Readability and Length of Newspaper Editorials

• Longer newspaper editorials are more dominant (more preferred) form than shorter newspaper editorials.

• Shorter editorials are more readable than longer editorials.

• Editorial length (based on the number of words) can be a predictor of textual readability.

2. Implications

The following implications are drawn upon taking into consideration the findings and conclusions of the study:

• The study’s finding that newspaper editorials of English national dailies of India, specifically the highly circulating newspapers are hard to read suggests that the editorials use difficult linguistic textual features. This implies that the linguistic complexity is mainly due to two textual variables – word and sentence structure (as Flesch Reading Ease Score formula uses these two variables as determinants of textual readability). The study highlights the significance of the basic elements of writing – words and sentences in expressing ideas and assigning meaning to the written text.

• The study depicts that highly circulating newspapers do not possess highly readable editorials. This so-called high circulation may be a result of two situations – people buying newspapers but not reading it or, people buying newspapers and reading it but ignoring the editorial texts. Either of the two reasons suggests readers discarding
editorial texts. The main cause of such situation may be the inability to read the editorial texts due to difficult textual characteristics of the editorials. Hence, high circulation cannot be considered as an indicator of high readability.

- The finding that descriptive style of writing is more readable than interpretative and persuasive style suggests that describing an issue is easier to express than interpreting and persuading to its readers. In descriptive style of expressing, there is less of interpretation and persuasion and more of describing the issue in such a way that the readers see, feel and hear what they have never seen, felt or heard. In case of interpretative and persuasive text, the reader needs to think a lot in understanding the underlining meaning of the text. For bringing out the significance of the issue, various writing techniques such as examples, historical background, anecdotes, comparisons, etc., are used. This implies that in interpretation and persuasion, editors need to use lots of in-depth explanation amounting to using of more words and sentences. This directly increases the length of the editorials thereby making it less readable.

- Descriptive editorials, politics based editorials and suggestive editorials, which are the most preferred form of editorials, are not the most readable ones within their own categories (writing style, subject theme and tone respectively). Suggestive editorials even emerged to be the least readable editorial among editorials based on the tone of presentation. This implies that the most preferred style of writing, subject theme and tone of the editorials which the editors use have low readability factor. This is the main reason that on an average, the newspaper editorials of English national dailies of India, specifically the high circulating ones are hard to read.

- The subject theme of the newspaper editorials is another factor for predicting the textual readability. Issues which focus on human interest and lighter themes such as miscellaneous issues (art and literature, religion, lifestyle matters, etc.) community development, glamour, entertainment, etc. are more readable as compared to serious issues such as science and technology, crime and legislation, politics, etc. In serious issues such as science and technology, crime and legislation, and politics, there are high chances of using technical words, jargons and abbreviated terms. Simple,
familiar and short words are always easy to understand whereas unfamiliar and long words are difficult to understand. Since vocabulary is also a good predictor of textual readability, using of difficult and unfamiliar words ultimately increases the difficult level of the editorials based on such serious themes.

- Newspaper editorial length (in terms of number of words) can be a good predictor of textual readability. A readable text is the one which is short and precise. In understanding longer text, the reader needs more time to read and recall the meaning of the message. This significantly means that in the long process of understanding the message, there are high chances of forgetting the parts of the message or losing concentration, which ultimately leads to decline in the reader’s interest level. In such cases, the degree of ease with which we read and understand a message decreases.

3. Recommendations for the Media Industry

The following recommendations are suggested for the media industry on the basis of the findings and implications of the study:

- As observed from the study, readability is an important factor for determining the degree of efficacy of printed text. Considering the importance of readability for printed materials, the concept of readability and its applicability should be made aware of in the media industry.

- Measuring readability of pre-publication materials by using specific readability formulae would help in the overall increase in the readability of the printed texts. A compulsory process of testing of readability of the written texts during the editing process would be highly beneficial. This would definitely boost the readership, circulation and productivity of print media organisations.

- Media persons, specifically those responsible for writing the print media texts such as reporters, editors and proof readers should be well versed in written language. They should be aware of the various linguistic factors that should be taken into consideration for making written texts highly readable for its readers.
• Writing at the specific reading grade level of the target audience (specific reader categories) would be one way of increasing the success of the print media industry. For print media sectors such as newspapers which are meant for the general readers (of varying educational reading grades), it would be beneficial to write at a lower reading grade level. On the other hand, for magazines and books which are meant for specific readers (of specific educational reading grades), it should be written at the specific reading grade levels of the target readers.

• In online media industries where information is released in a very fast pace for the public, readability should be a matter of high concern. Many online news reports are found to be less readable as they are bombarded with deadlines and heavy competition from other online channels. It is highly recommended that such online news channels check and enhance the readability of the electronic texts before uploading it in their sites for public reading.

• Apart from the text specific readability assessments such as readability formulae, assessing readability from the readers’ perspective can also be conducted during specific time periods to know whether the readers actually find the printed media text readable or not. A purposive survey targeting the specific readers by using Cloze technique could be conducted. The results of the Cloze test would depict the suitability of the newspaper text on the basis of the readers’ reading skills.

• Newspaper editorials, specifically in the Indian context should be written at lower reading grade levels to increase the readability of the editorial texts. It is also recommended that along with the use of easy linguistic structures, newspaper editorials should be written in descriptive style as they are found to be the most readable writing style. Rather than focusing too much on serious issues such as politics, science and technology, crime and legislation, etc., newspaper editorials should also start highlighting on the lighter societal issues as they are found to be more readable than the serious ones.
4. Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations are suggested for future research on the basis of the findings and implications of the study:

• Since a readable text increases the chances of readers reading the text, studies can be conducted comparing the readability of prominent newspaper pages (front, edit, international, business, sports page, etc.) to know the most readable page for newspaper readers.

• In the light of the present research findings, the editing process for the newspaper editorials needs to be reconsidered to improve the readability and efficacy of the newspaper editorials. So, studies can be conducted to explore the in-depth editing process of newspaper editorials.

• Since readability is a result of the interaction between the text and its readers (with specific characteristics such as knowledge, education, reading skills, motives, interest, etc.) studies involving a combined technique of quantitative (objective testing) and qualitative (subjective testing) should be conducted to get a holistic assessment of both the textual and readers' characteristics.

• Readability research in the Indian context is a comparatively new field of study. Hence, further study and analysis on the readability of written documents (of various fields) in India needs to be conducted.

• A comparative multiyear study of readability of newspaper editorials of Indian newspapers can be conducted to get an account of the readability of newspaper editorials before and after a specific time period.

• Studies can be conducted to explore the role of design and illustration in predicting the readability of printed text. Since the two visual elements – design and illustration are very much a part of printed texts, the proposed study can provide a broader perspective of analysing readability by going beyond the linguistic features of the text.
• Since Hindi and vernacular newspapers are extremely popular in India with a vast bulk of print readers in India consuming Hindi and vernacular newspaper content, readability studies can also be conducted for Hindi and vernacular newspapers in order to check the suitability of these language newspapers for its readers.

• Very few studies in the development of readability formulae in Indian languages have been reported but still its application and usability is in its infancy. Hence, further research in developing highly tested, reliable and full-fledged usable readability formulae for Indian languages needs to be thrust upon.

Language plays an important role in communication. It is the medium through which people express and understand the meaning of the messages. The study of readability focuses on the structure of written language. In an effective communication, it is the content that plays an important role. The content determines the audience as good content attracts audience. In written communication, it is a readable text that amounts to a good content. The study provided a platform to analyse the efficacy of written public text. It attempted to find out the suitability of the written text (newspaper editorials) for its readers.

Through the research findings, the study has pointed out serious deficiencies in the structure of newspaper editorials in the Indian context. Irrespective of its circulation, the success of a newspaper can be judged only when its content, specifically the lesser read ones such as editorials are read by all people of different reading skills. The present study, though not the first study on readability in Indian context is an innovative attempt to predict the suitability of mainstream Indian print media to its vast readers. The study could provide an effective platform for encouraging future research in this field in the Indian context.