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# **Sociolinguistic, morphosyntactic, semantic and stylistic gender detection-oriented comparative analysis of opening and topic sentences of an article published by The Guardian, The Daily Mirror, The Telegraph and The Independent**

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**Abstract.** Comparative analysis of a daily news published by The Guardian, The Daily Mirror, The Telegraph and The Independent is a short discussion on syntactic and semantic variability(ies). The comparison between the four includes an overview of the morphosyntactic operator, semantic operator, female language parameters operator analysis of opening and topic sentence. This article might be useful as an insight into corpus analysis of newspaper discourse. It is also a confirmation of the null hypothesis: Female language dominates in natural disaster reports! Due to the skimming and scanning current habits opening and topic sentence analysis has been done!

**Keywords:** newspaper discourse, comparative analysis, corpus analysis.

## **A. Introduction**

Allan Bell says the following:

The study of media language has much to offer to the different disciplines on whose territory it touches: linguistics, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, semiotics, communication studies, sociology and social psychology (Bell, -, 2).

In pragmatics conventions are rules that dictate how to use language units and speech elements. According to Ch.W. Morris, the use of language is regulated by the sets of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic rules (Morris, 1938 in D.S. Khranchenko, 2019: 139).

Analysis of an article published by The Guardian, The Daily Mirror, The Telegraph and The Independent is a short insight into newspaper discourse on a syntactic and semantic level.

## **B. Research Model**

In the study "Sociolinguistic, morphosyntactic, semantic and stylistic gender detection-oriented comparative analysis of an article published by The Guardian, The Daily Mirror, The Telegraph and The Independent" the following parameters have been used:

**i) background analysis operator**

is a general reference to the short background, format & style overview (of each newspaper) from the same source!

**ii) morphosyntactic operator**

includes two basic variables:

a) -tenses; active/passive

b) -Seven basic sentence (or clause) patterns (parameter). Examples are:

1. John / laughed. (SV)\*
2. John / kissed / Jane. (SVO)
3. John / is / tall. (SVC)
4. John / gave / Jane / a present. (SVOO)
5. John / made / Jane / angry. (SVOC)
6. John / sat / up. (SVA)
7. John / put / the bag / down. (SVOA)<sup>1</sup>

**iii) semantic operator**

(cf. Brinton, L. J. (-) *The Structure of Modern English Workbook*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company)

Includes the detection of the following semantic "occurrences":

(a) inclusion

(b) contradiction

(c) ambiguity — literal/metaphorical

- (d) ambiguity — homonymy
- (e) presupposition
- (f) ambiguity — polysemy
- (g) paraphrase
- (h) anomaly (Brinton, -: 125)

**iv) female language parameters operator**

Lakoff proposes that women's speech can be distinguished from that of men in a number of ways (part of the gender deficit model) (Lakoff 1975 in Majetic, 2023: 114-115).

Variables which are to be used in the research are as follows:

Hedges,

Polite Forms,

Question Tags,

Correct Grammar,

Intensifiers,

Indirect Commands and Requests,

Swearing,

Apologies,

Empty Adjectives,

Modal Verb Constructions,

Negative-interrogative Questions

and Special Lexicon (Lakoff 1975 in Majetic, 2023: 115).

**v) comparison operator**

includes simple and matrix sentence detection which includes a number of words in a sentence parameter classification!

### **C. Corpus Analysis**

An article selected for this analysis is selected intentionally from the "Natural Disaster" section! The goal was to have as neutral corpus as possible avoiding politics, entertainment and similar themes! The null hypothesis is: Female language dominates in natural disaster reports! The analysed article is about a storm in Britain which happened in February 2023. According to Wikipedia Otto is a "hurricane-force wind"<sup>2</sup>! The headlines published on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2023 are as follows:

**The Guardian** = Storm Otto: about 1,300 Scottish homes remain without power as conditions clear Met Office says the storm, which left more than 60,000 homes without power at one point, has moved on to Scandinavia<sup>3</sup>

**The Daily Mirror** = Storm Otto's trail of destruction sparks power cuts as Met Office issues warning More than 40,000 properties were left without power in Scotland yesterday, and the Met Office issued a snow and ice warning as Storm Otto brought gusts of up to 80mph in the UK<sup>4</sup>

**The Telegraph** = Thousands of homes without power as Storm Otto leaves a trail of destruction Storm Otto battered northern parts of the UK on Friday, leaving thousands of households without power<sup>5</sup>

**The Independent** = More than 1,000 homes still without power as Storm Otto moves away from the UK<sup>6</sup>

As expected and according to Allan Bell's study *The Language of News Media* "editor, copy editor and interpreter (Bell, -: 6)" usually change headline contents and therefore the headline might not be stylistically coherent to the rest of the article... In this very case, the four headlines are very much and almost the same! The Guardian is the most precise with 1,300 homes left without electricity, the Telegraph follows with 1,000 which is the same to what the Independent provides. The Daily Mirror just mentions the incident without any numerical aspirations, giving trails of destruction (synonym) instead!

Even though well respected, for young students recommended "manuals" recommend that Wikipedia articles are not to be used, this source is the essence of this research! Wikipedia gives well-organized, detailed and more, for this study, "similar origin-like" information with essential details on historical backgrounds, format and section outline(s) which is a starting point in initial comparison. Details on each newspaper are presented in almost the same format and are therefore used as a reference to the short background, format & style overview!

**i) background analysis operator**

a) The Independent

After a series of owners and after dealing with the problems of "inaccuracy and plagiarism (cf. section 2010-2016 in Wikipedia)<sup>7</sup> and after changing its format from a broadsheet into a tabloid afterwards it kept its online status.

b) The Telegraph

has a rather, over 160 years old tradition. The motto is "Was, is and will be" (cf. the introductory section in Wikipedia)<sup>8</sup>. Telegraph.co.uk is an online version describing, (for this "storm Otto research" potentially influential background information), "climate scientists as "white-coated prima donnas and narcissists" (cf. "Climate change denialism and misinformation" section in Wikipedia).<sup>9</sup>

c) The Daily Mirror

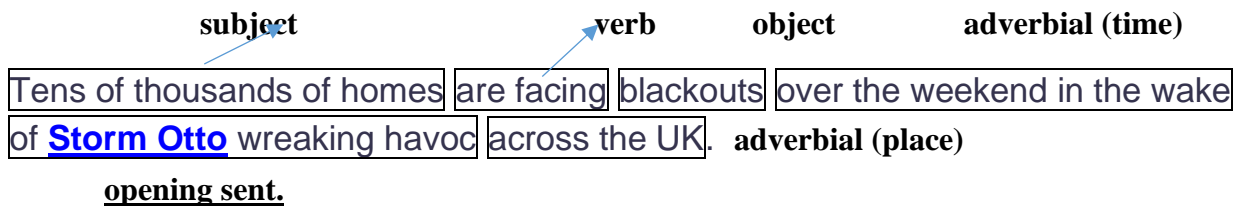
Is a national daily tabloid newspaper "[f]ounded in 1903 (and) launched [...] as a newspaper for women run by women. About the name, he (Alfred Harmsworth) said: "I intend it to be really a mirror of a feminine life as well as on its grave as on its lighter sides... to be entertaining without being frivolous, and serious without being dull"(cf. history section in Wikipedia).<sup>10</sup>

d) The Guardian

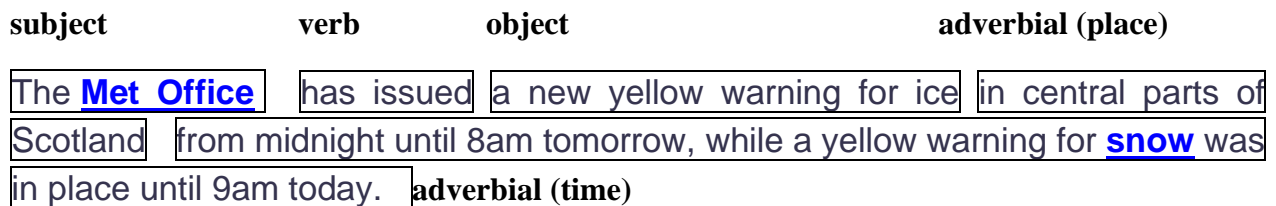
"founded in 1821 as The Manchester Guardian and changed its name in 1959 [...]"<sup>11</sup> It has received various rewards! It has criticized slavery, supported LGBT-oriented movements etc. and (has) "played a pivotal role in"<sup>12</sup> exposing this and that! The Guardian is considered to be a newspaper for the middle-class proclaiming Liberalism! Some of its articles have been retracted and it has been a target of cyber-attacks!

ii) **Morphosyntactic operator**

(a) The Daily Mirror



**SVOAA Present Continuous (active)**



**SVOAA Present Perfect Simple (active) topic sent.**

(b) The Guardian

**opening sent.**

**subject**

**verb**

About 1,300 homes that lost power during Storm Otto had still not been reconnected to the grid as of Saturday afternoon, according to energy firms.

**object**

**adverbial (time)**

**SVOA Past Perfect Simple Tense (active)**

The Met Office said the storm had "well and truly cleared" but more than 1,000 homes in Aberdeenshire remain without power.

**subject**

**adverbial (place)**

**verb**

**object**

**SV , SVA, SVOA**

**Past Simple Tense (active), Past Perfect Simple Tense (active), Present Simple Tense (active) topic sent.**

(c) The Independent



### Present Perfect Simple Tense (passive)

S	V	O	A (time)
Thousands of homes	could be	without power	over the weekend

as food vans were dispatched to the worst-hit areas in the wake of [Storm Otto](#).

### SVOA

### Past Simple Tense (active) topic sent.

#### iii) Semantic operator

##### (a) The Daily Mirror

Tens of thousands of homes are facing blackouts over the weekend in the wake of [Storm Otto](#) wreaking havoc across the UK.

#### presupposition

The [Met Office](#) has issued a new yellow warning for ice in central parts of Scotland from midnight until 8am tomorrow, while a yellow warning for [snow](#) was in place until 9am today.

#### inclusion

##### (b) The Guardian

About 1,300 homes that lost power during Storm Otto had still not been reconnected to the grid as of Saturday afternoon, according to energy firms.

#### contradiction

The Met Office said the storm had “well and truly cleared” but more than 1,000 homes in Aberdeenshire remain without power.

## contradiction

(c) The Independent

More than one thousand homes which lost power during [Storm Otto](#) had still not been reconnected to the grid late on Saturday afternoon.

## entailment

The [Met Office](#) said the storm has “well and truly cleared” but around 1,300 homes in [Aberdeenshire](#) remain without power.

## contradiction

(e) The Telegraph

The storm, the first to be named this winter, has been labelled Otto by the Danish Meteorological Institute CREDIT: PA

## entailment

Thousands of homes could be without power over the weekend as food vans were dispatched to the worst-hit areas in the wake of [Storm Otto](#).

## inclusion

### iv) Female language parameters operator

(a) The Daily Mirror

Tens of thousands of homes are facing blackouts over the weekend in the wake of [Storm Otto](#) wreaking havoc across the UK.

### special lexicon

The [Met Office](#) has issued [a new yellow warning for ice](#) in central parts of Scotland from midnight until 8am tomorrow, while [a yellow warning for snow](#) was in place until 9am today.

### special lexicon

(b) The Guardian

About 1,300 homes that lost power during Storm Otto [had still not been reconnected](#) to the grid as of Saturday afternoon, according to energy firms.

### indirect speech

The Met Office said the storm had [“well and truly cleared”](#) but more than 1,000 homes in Aberdeenshire remain without power.

### intensifiers

(c) The Independent

More than one thousand homes which lost power during [Storm Otto](#) [had still not been reconnected](#) to the grid late on Saturday afternoon.

### indirect speech

The [Met Office](#) said the storm has [“well and truly cleared”](#) but around 1,300 homes in [Aberdeenshire](#) remain without power.

### intensifiers

(d) The Telegraph

The storm, the first to be named this winter, [has been labelled Otto by the Danish Meteorological Institute](#) CREDIT: PA

### indirect speech

Thousands of homes could be without power over the weekend as food vans were dispatched to the worst-hit areas in the wake of [Storm Otto](#).

**modal verb construction**

**vi) Comparison operator**

A number of words in a sentence parameter:

(a) The Daily Mirror

Tens of thousands of homes are facing blackouts over the weekend in the wake of [Storm Otto](#) wreaking havoc across the UK.

22

The [Met Office](#) has issued a new yellow warning for ice in central parts of Scotland from midnight until 8am tomorrow, while a yellow warning for [snow](#) was in place until 9am today.

33

(b) The Guardian

About 1,300 homes that lost power during Storm Otto had still not been reconnected to the grid as of Saturday afternoon, according to energy firms.

25

The Met Office said the storm had “well and truly cleared” but more than 1,000 homes in Aberdeenshire remain without power.

21

(c) The Independent

More than one thousand homes which lost power during [Storm Otto](#) had still not been reconnected to the grid late on Saturday afternoon.

23

The [Met Office](#) said the storm has “well and truly cleared” but around 1,300 homes in [Aberdeenshire](#) remain without power.

20

(d) The Telegraph

The storm, the first to be named this winter, has been labelled Otto by the Danish Meteorological Institute CREDIT: PA

18

Thousands of homes could be without power over the weekend as food vans were dispatched to the worst-hit areas in the wake of [Storm Otto](#).

25

## **D. Results and Discussion**

Table 1 is an attempt to schematically present four parameters corpus analysis results collectively. The parameters are:

- 1 morphosyntactic operator
- 2 semantic operator
- 3 female language parameters operator
- 4 comparison operator

The result of the four parameters analysis are as follows:

CORPUS		morphosyntactic operator	semantic operator	female language parameters operator	comparison operator
The Guardian	opening sent.	SVOA Past Perfect Simple Tense (active)	contradiction	indirect speech	25
	topic sent.	SV, SVA, SVOA Past Simple Tense (active), Past Perfect Simple Tense (active), Present Simple Tense (active)	contradiction	intensifiers	21
The Independent	opening sent.	SVAA Past Perfect, Simple Tense (passive)	entailment	indirect speech	23
	topic sent.	SV, SVA, SVOA Past Simple Tense (active), Present Perfect Simple Tense (active), Present Simple Tense (active)	contradiction	intensifiers	20
The Daily Mirror	opening sent.	SVOAA Present Continuous (active)	presupposition	special lexicon	22
	topic sent.	SVOAA Present Perfect Simple (active)	inclusion	special lexicon	33
The Telegraph	opening sent.	SVOA Present Perfect Simple Tense (passive)	entailment	indirect speech	18
	topic sent.	SVOA Past Simple Tense (active)	inclusion	modal verb construction	25

**Table 1:** Collective (Four Parameters) Corpus Analysis Results

The article "Analyzing Newspaper Content: A How-to Guide Including National Comparison Data for U.S. Daily Newspapers" By Stacy Lynch & Limor Peer (2002) gives extensive instructions from selecting coders to the "other newspapers" comparison method, however, it is intended for the extremely extensive discourse research of one newspaper over a period of time and more importantly explores every section of a newspaper which demands (students) coders, etc. Due to the manual extensiveness and the amount of discourse templates it was a good motivation for this short corpus analysis. Skimming and scanning news nowadays is a must therefore analysis of opening and topic sentences is a source of this very sentence discourse analysis! On account of the overexploitation of visual images these two photos have been used by all four newspapers:



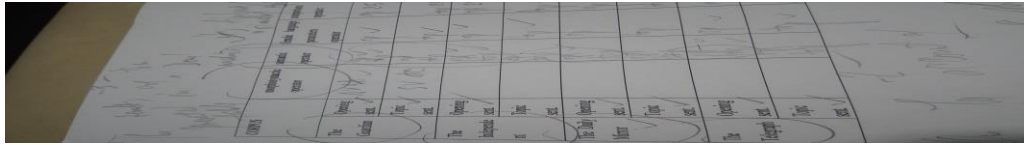
**Illustration 1:** visual presentation of the storm (sea)<sup>13</sup>



**Illustration 2:** visual presentation of the storm (land)<sup>14</sup>



**Illustration 3:** Individual Corpus Analysis Illustration



**Illustration 4:** Collective Corpus Analysis Illustration

## **E. Conclusion(s)**

On the account of the skimming and scanning trends, the morphosyntactic and semantic analysis of (matrix) sentences has been done. In order not to repeat the same, the table is used as a tool for the comparison analysis!

Natural disasters became something with which we are faced every day. It is difficult to report on disasters! This study has proved that female language is being used in natural disaster reports! Female language has been used as a tool in natural disaster reports!

Background analysis is in fact a selected short summary. The reference which has been used for the background information is Wikipedia i.e. all four summaries are from Wikipedia. The summaries are rather short and serve only as a direction for the reader. Another reason for providing short summaries on each newspaper is to avoid the influence of personally selected information on each newspaper!

The morphosyntactic operator includes two variables. The tense variable, extremely predictably, shows that the tense which has been used is present perfect simple which is, in this case, used in its most common sense. Past simple is used to present that an activity happened when the other action has happened e.g. a yellow warning for snow was in place<sup>15</sup> ... (as) The Met Office has issued (a new warning) a new yellow warning for ice.

The passive is being used when the storm is the doer of the action e.g. [...] the storm has well and truly cleared [...] <sup>16</sup> The seven basic sentence pattern parameter shows SV, SVA, SVOA,

SVAA, SVOAA (five) functional varieties. The semantic operator has been used to detect "elements and full" "semantic occurrence" of contradiction, inclusion, entailment, presupposition.

Female language parameters have been presented by the indirect report e.g. the Met Office said etc., intensifiers e.g. well and truly (cleared), special meteorological jargon e.g. a yellow warning for snow/ice, the wake of Storm. The shortest sentence had 18, the longest 33 words. Past perfect has been inevitable in matrixes! The font is as in the original article!

The corpus was short because the news was daily! The contents of the daily news on the storm Otto have no longer been available. If one searches the site the error 404! Uh oh! Page not found! We couldn't find the page you were looking for Oops!<sup>17</sup> The warning that the Otto storm article is not available has been a motive for the prompt publication of this article!

## References

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[2] Brinton, L. J. -. *The Structure of Modern English Workbook*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

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[4][https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022%E2%80%93European\\_windstorm\\_season#Storm\\_Otto\\_\(Ulf\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022%E2%80%93European_windstorm_season#Storm_Otto_(Ulf))19.2.2023

[5]<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/feb/18/storm-otto-thousands-of-uk-homes-face-blackouts-as-wind-gusts-reach-80mph>19.2.2023

[6]<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/uk-snow-storm-ottos-trail-29248278>19.2.2023

[7]<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/02/18/thousands-homes-without-power-storm-otto-leaves-trail-destruction/>19.2.2023

[8] <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/met-office-storm-otto-europe-aberdeenshire-scotland-b2284876.html>19.2.2023

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<https://eximiajournal.com/index.php/eximia/article/view/223>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> <https://ghoti.blog/english/7-basic-sentence-patterns/> 22.2.2023

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022%E2%80%93European\\_windstorm\\_season#Storm\\_Otto\\_\(Ulf\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022%E2%80%93European_windstorm_season#Storm_Otto_(Ulf))19.2.2023

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/feb/18/storm-otto-thousands-of-uk-homes-face-blackouts-as-wind-gusts-reach-80mph>19.2.2023

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/uk-snow-storm-ottos-trail-29248278>19.2.2023

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/02/18/thousands-homes-without-power-storm-otto-leaves-trail-destruction/>19.2.2023

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/met-office-storm-otto-europe-aberdeenshire-scotland-b2284876.html>19.2.2023

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/met-office-storm-otto-europe-aberdeenshire-scotland-b2284876.html>19.2.2023

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/02/18/thousands-homes-without-power-storm-otto-leaves-trail-destruction/19.2.2023>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/02/18/thousands-homes-without-power-storm-otto-leaves-trail-destruction/19.2.2023>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/uk-snow-storm-ottos-trail-2924827819.2.2023>

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/feb/18/storm-otto-thousands-of-uk-homes-face-blackouts-as-wind-gusts-reach-80mph19.2.2023>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/02/18/thousands-homes-without-power-storm-otto-leaves-trail-destruction/19.2.2023>

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<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/met-office-storm-otto-europe-aberdeenshire-scotland-b2284876.html19.2.2023>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/02/18/thousands-homes-without-power-storm-otto-leaves-trail-destruction/19.2.2023>

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/uk-snow-storm-ottos-trail-2924827819.2.2023>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/uk-snow-storm-ottos-trail-2924827819.2.2023>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/uk-snow-storm-ottos-trail-2924827819.2.2023>

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The author declares no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article!

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**N. B.** The articles on "Strom Otto" in February 2023 are widespread since, exposed to the public which includes a corpora analysis!

### **Figure Legends**

**Figure 1:** Table 1: Collective (Four Parameters) Corpus Analysis Results

**Figure 2:** Illustration 1: visual presentation of the storm (sea)

**Figure 3:** Illustration 2: visual presentation of the storm (land)

**Figure 4:** Illustration 3: Individual Corpus Analysis Illustration

**Figure 5:** Illustration 4: Collective Corpus Analysis Illustration