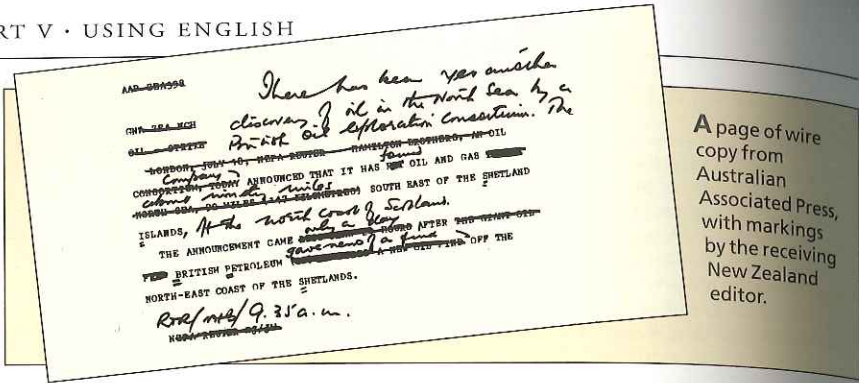


JOURNALINGUISTICS

Three aspects of the way news is received, processed, and presented are shown on this page. They are taken from an in-depth investigation of news media language by Allan Bell, a New Zealand sociolinguist who has also worked as a journalist and editor in a daily news service. This combination of personal experience and linguistic training is rare in research into language variety. We do not usually find journalist-linguists, politician-linguists, or priest-linguists. People who are busy earning their living from being the first part of these compounds do not usually have the motivation, opportunity, or training to take up the role of the second. When it does happen, the analysis can provide considerable insight into the mental processes underlying the occupational variety, as well as accumulate a great deal of practical illustration which would not be available to outsiders. The first two examples on this page derive directly from Bell's personal experience. He had access to the teleprinter copy coming into a news office after it had been marked up by the receiving editor and before it was thrown away. And he was able to get hold of both the agency copy and the edited version of the sports story. With the advent of direct screen editing, of course, it is now much more difficult for linguists to observe the stages in the editorial production of a text. There are simply no 'hard copy' printouts to collect.



A page of wire copy from Australian Associated Press, with markings by the receiving New Zealand editor.

BEFORE AND AFTER

Two stages in a story: the left-hand text is a sports story transmitted by Australian Associated Press-Reuter from Sydney; the right-hand text is the version edited by the New Zealand Press Association. Material is deleted, altered, and added. The commentary below shows the multiple linguistic decisions which the New Zealand editor made in the first paragraph. (For grammatical terminology, see Part III.)

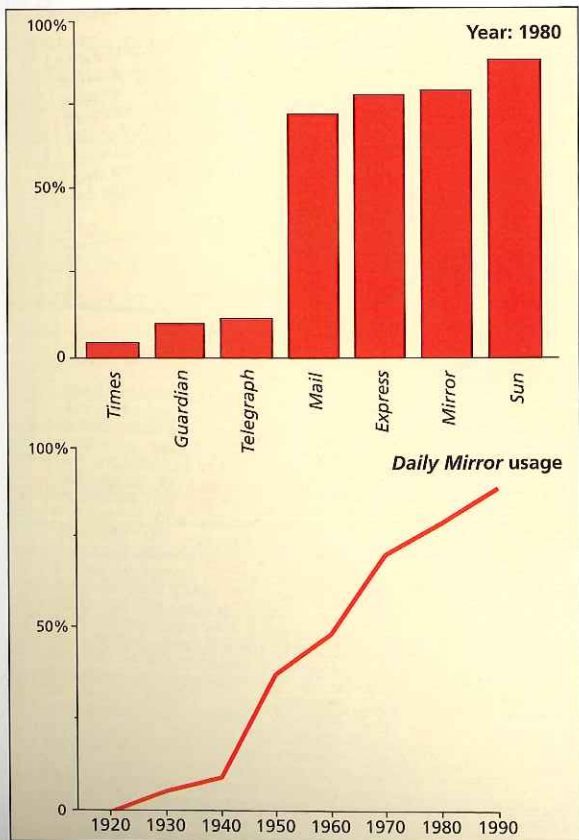
The waterlogged conditions that ruled out play yesterday still prevailed at Bourda this morning, and it was not until mid-afternoon that the match restarted. Less than three hours' play remained, and with the West Indies still making their first innings reply to England's total of 448, there was no chance of a result. At tea the West Indies were two for 139.

Waterlogged conditions ruled out play this morning, but the match resumed with less than three hours' play remaining for the final day.

The West Indies are making a first innings reply to England's total of 448.

At tea the West Indies were 139 for two, but there's no chance of a result.

- Place adverbial *at Bourda* deleted.
- Time adverbials *yesterday* and *still* deleted.
- Main verb *prevailed* deleted.
- Relative clause *that... yesterday* made a main clause.
- Relative pronoun *that* and associated *the* deleted.
- Cleft structure (p. 231) *it... restarted* replaced by a subject-predicate clause, *the match resumed...*
- Time adverbial *not until mid-afternoon* deleted.
- *resume* replaces *restart*.
- *but* replaces *and*.
- Part of the next sentence added: *less... remaining*.
- Change of finiteness (p. 212): *remained* becomes *remaining*.
- New time adverbial introduced: *for the final day*.



Some features convey more than just semantic content; they also inform about readership. This is seen in the way a determiner (p. 207) is used or deleted in such contexts as [the] *Australian prime minister Paul Keating said...* The top chart shows deletion to be a sociolinguistic feature of newspaper style, typical of British tabloid journalism. The bottom chart shows that this feature has developed during the present century. The *Daily Mirror* made no use of it in 1920, but it had reached 90 per cent by 1990. Why this particular feature should be so salient is unclear, but it is certainly diagnostic of the social stratification which readership analyses have found for these papers.

JOURNALESE

There are several distinctive linguistic features of news reporting. Most relate fairly clearly to the 'who, when, where, what, how, and why' which journalists bear in mind when compiling a story.

- The headline is critical, summarizing and drawing attention to the story. Its telegraphic style is probably the best-known feature of news reporting.
- The first ('lead') paragraph both summarizes and begins to tell the story. This paragraph is also the usual source of the headline, which is written not by the source journalist but by one of the subeditors (p. 380).
- The original source of the story is given, either in a byline (Reuters) or built into the text (*A senior White House official said...*).
- The participants are categorized, their name usually being preceded by a general term (*champ, prisoner, official*) and adjectives (*handsome French singer Jean Bruno...*).
- Other features include explicit time and place locators (*In Paris yesterday...*), facts and figures (*66 people were killed in a bomb blast...*), and direct or indirect quotations (*PM 'bungles', says expert, Expert says PM bungled*).