

PREFERENCE FOR RHETORICAL QUESTIONS AS AN INDEX OF TEXTUAL MESSAGE EFFECTIVENESS

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the rhetorical question (RQ) as a style of literary comment because the conventional essay style of writing has always been the norm in virtually all kinds of prose writing. This is connected with the fact that the latter is easier to write and also understand without the complexities of nuances, understanding satirical implications or metaphorical extensions. Thus, it is easy to conclude that readers will not be favourably disposed to any departure from the norm. But that would be a simplistic explanation. Using an Effectiveness Rating Instrument (ERI), 1,550 readers were presented with a text using mainly RQs and the same text using conventional prose here referred to as Alternative Stylistic Option (ASO). Responses were analyzed using cross tabs. It was found that preference for RQs was higher than that of the ASOs. Reasons given for this include the fact that RQs are more realistic and more forceful. Implications of these findings for readers and writers were highlighted.

Key Words: Rhetorical Questions, Preference, Message Effectiveness, Effectiveness Rating Instrument

1. Introduction

Style is an improvement and an expansion on rhetoric, which has been a discipline worthy of study since the times of Aristotle. "Rhetoric refers to the art of oratory, or persuasive speaking – the art of effective argumentation with the view to influencing opinion" (Yankah: 1994:3568). Having the ability to speak persuasively is of primary importance especially to someone who has to face a crowd. A Yoruba proverb says "speech is like an egg, when it drops, it shatters". Agbese (1987: 9) puts it succinctly: "the word, written or spoken, is a powerful instrument for social dynamics..." Akinkugbe & Evo- Philips (2004:21) captures it in this expression: "Words are the instrument with which man wields power... with words man makes things and get things done".

In politics, business, social and cultural situations, the ability to manipulate the audience by playing on their emotions, usually tells who is an orator and who is not. Rhetoric has been studied and practiced by ancient Greeks since the 5th century BC. The foundation for elegant, sophisticated, specialized and polished writing was laid through systematic and scientific rhetoric championed by Aristotle and later by Quintilian and Cicero. A related aspect of language use was the art of creating a dialogue made popular by Socrates. Dialectics was the term used in referring to the study of creating and guiding a dialogue, talk or discussion, as well as the study of methods of persuasion. It is perhaps one of the most convenient and effective forms of exchanging experiences. These two aspects formed the bedrock of modern day stylistics.

Aristotle's study of rhetoric was basically a practical analysis of how to construct a persuasive and successful legal argument. The Greeks were renowned for their art of public speaking, especially in the area of politics and legislation where students were made to memorize their speeches and deliver them in special gatherings and in courts. Some of these people were called 'persuaders' since they set out to persuade people to take sides with them. Throughout European history, due to its association with democratic institutions, rhetoric is believed to flourish in open and democratic societies with such rights as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of political affiliations. In modern parlance, however, "rhetoric" is usually a pejorative term applied to language that seems pretentious, insincere, long-winded, sneaky, subtle, elaborate or intellectually vacuous. Thus, rhetoric is defined as relating to the art of public speaking; and is characterized by language that is elevated and sometimes stiff and pompous in style.

2. Rhetorical Questions (RQs)

Several scholars had earlier defined the rhetorical question as that question that does not expect an answer. Han (2002: 202) argues that a rhetorical question has the illocutionary force of an assertion of the opposite polarity from what is apparently asked.

According to Koshik (2003: 723),” a review of the literature suggests that this interrogative form is as difficult to define as it is communicatively successful”. Abioye (2008:8) examines the resourcefulness of RQs using Ehusani’s “A New Year Prayer for Peace” as corpus, and observes that:

The RQ is used to admonish, make a plea or request, commend or pay tribute, condemn or vilify as the case may be ... capable of giving implicit structure (sometimes) to messages, can be used to generate or end discussions, provide reasons/ answers, constitute opposition or reach reasonable conclusions.

It is also seen as a question asked without expecting an answer but for the sake of persuasive effect rather than as a genuine request for information, the speaker implying that the answer is too obvious to require a reply or merely as a way of making a point. The expected answer is usually "yes" or "no." For example, *Can we agree that this will not happen again?*

RQ a rhetorical question is a figure of speech in the form of a question posed for its persuasive effect without the expectation of a reply: For example *"How can I ever thank you, Lord?"*

Rhetorical questions encourage the listener to reflect on what the implied answer to the question must be. When a speaker states, *"What is the meaning of this?"* or *"How does that concern me?"* no formal answer is expected. Rather, it is a device used by the speaker to assert or deny something obvious. The purpose of this figure of speech is not to secure a response but to assert or deny a point implicitly. Thus, a rhetorical question may serve as a subtle way of insinuating an idea that might be challenged by an audience if asserted directly. It is often an effective tool particularly in law courts where lawyers try to establish facts through cross examination often using leading questions such as *"Is it so difficult for you to be polite to strangers?"* This type of question frequently suggests what the answer should be, along with the question being declaratory. Sometimes, a rhetorical question is asked only as a thought- provoking gesture or a way of stimulating discussion that does not necessarily require an answer.

In fact, it is often a way of making a tentative statement but phrasing it in the form of a question. This occurs frequently in debates, particularly of a political nature, where it is used as a tool to avoid making an outright claim or declaration, but at the same time still being able to make a point (Baldick, 2004). For instance, *"Is it not clear that teachers are better than farmers in this regard?"* This is a rhetorical question that does not really have a concrete or measurable answer; the answer is often based on individual opinion and assessment. Such questions are quite capable of inspiring new thoughts, ideas and even further debate. It is thus a clever way to avoid coming to an obvious conclusion. The purpose of this study, however, is to closely examine preference for RQs as a stylistic device that exemplifies textual message effectiveness, why readers prefer the RQ and how this can be maximally utilized in reading and writing.

The rhetorical question (RQ), in the nature of all interrogatives, is structurally the same as any other question (Quirk *et al*, 1985:804). This means that the syntactic structure of an RQ is usually similar to that of any other interrogative. The marked difference, however, is that the RQ is semantically/functionally a statement or a claim that the writer/speaker is ready to tell his readers/hearers the answer; that the answer is already known, or that nobody, not even the writer, knows the answer. This means that the RQ is usually presented in two forms, which could be either written or spoken: the distinction between the former and the latter is usually in the punctuation marks and the tone respectively. (Quirk *et al* 1985: 825) observe that:

RQs are one of the two minor types of questions; the exclamatory and the rhetorical question. The RQ draws attention to the relationship between question and exclamation, as the negative yes – no question can be used exclamatorily. For instance, "Isn't Mary kind!" which is represented by a question mark if it is a question.

Also, Positive RQ as in: *"You mean you don't know the Minister of Finance?"* (Surely, everyone knows the Minister of Finance); and Negative as in: *"Haven't you got a better excuse?"* (You mean you don't have a better excuse?)

Another quality of the RQ is found in the discourse function of echo utterances, which are presented as either questions or exclamations (Quirk *et al* 1985: 825). Echo questions are either recapitulatory or explicatory. (Quirk *et al*, 1985: 836) argue that: "Since an echo question can refer back to any type of utterance, a special case of it is a question about a question, sometimes called a question raised to the second power."

A: *What do you think of the picture?*

B: *What do I THINK of it? (Did you say what do I think of it?)*

The answer to a rhetorical question can also be "no!" or "never!" or "of course not": *"Will you shut up?"* Rhetorical questions (RQs) are as old as language itself because they are part of language and they are used a lot especially in *The Bible* (See Beekman & Callow 1976; Abioye 2009 for instance).

A rhetorical question can end in either a question mark, or an exclamation mark or a period, depending on the context and the writer's purpose: “I did everything I could for that ingrate. Do you think he was grateful?” (Apparently not). “How can I ever thank you enough!” (I am overwhelmed by your kindness). Shylock, in William Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, rationalizes his insistence on his “pound of flesh”:

*[...] if it will feed nothing else,
It will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hinder'd
Me half a million; laugh't at my losses, mock'd at my gains,
Scorn'd my nation, thwarted my bargains, cool'd my friends,
Heated mine enemies: and what's his real reason? I am a Jew.
Hath not a Jew eyes?
Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections,
Passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons,
Subject to the same diseases, heal'd by the same means, warm'd
And cool'd by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If
You prick us, do we not bleed, if you tickle us, do we not laugh?
If you poison us, do we not die?
And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?* (Act III, Scene I).

He argues passionately, highlighting reasons why Jews should be treated like people from other races; and why he must have his revenge from Antonio who had no better reason to subject him to different forms of indignity, but the fact that Shylock was a Jew. This reference to his race being the reason behind his travails was revealed in a rhetorical question that is immediately answered; the type Abioye (2009: 6) classifies as “Type G”. The purpose of this type of RQ is “to chide, express grief or inveigh against something or somebody”, in this case, Antonio. Readers are swayed to his side when he outlines the injustice he had suffered before they are told the reason behind this treatment in a simple sentence. Then, in a series of RQs asked in quick succession classified as “Type B” (Abioye, 2009:5), the type that:

...express strong emphasis; weighty ideas/emotions; a sense of bewilderment, and strong feelings of outrage. Such RQs usually form a paragraph or a concept. Inherent contradictions are highlighted and reduced to virtually nothing. These jolt the reader out of a state of complacency, boredom and stupor and they express stronger and more vehement indignation. This means that the strong feelings expressed here are amplified by the profusion and or repetition of the RQs.

Readers have an insight into why Shylock is so aggrieved that he keeps insisting on revenge. Thus, his commitment to *the bond* is borne not out of the need for the money but as a result of the strong feelings of outrage and inherent contradictions expressed in the series of RQs, which were used for stylistic effect. The RQs make a direct appeal to the sense of respect for human dignity that everybody deserves.

Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* also exemplifies how RQs are used to charge emotions. First, Marcus Brutus, in defending himself and other conspirators after they had murdered Caesar, asked:

...who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak; for him have I offended... I pause for a reply (Act III Scene II).

He asked the questions knowing full well that nobody would dare to come out and deny being a patriotic Roman citizen. The idea is to provoke them to react the way he wants. Of course, none had the courage to answer him. The RQs embellish the level of language used, make a direct appeal to the Romans as well as question their sense of patriotism. All the RQs used here were for stylistic effect as well as to work up emotions.

Also, there are innumerable RQs on the internet (<http://fly.hiwaay.net/~rudy/why.html> 2001). For instance:

- i. *What are undergarments called when they are worn alone?*
- ii. *Why does an alarm clock “go off” when it begins ringing?*
- iii. *Why does “cleave” mean both split apart and stick together?*
- iv. *Why does the **Return** key move the cursor to a new line?*
- v. *Why is the third hand on a watch called the second hand?*
- vi. *If practice makes perfect, and no one's perfect, then why practice?*

Clearly, the functions of this type of RQs are different from the ones identified earlier in this study. This last category is a collection of “empty” RQs as they rarely produce logical answers. They are axioms that are generally accepted as the norm.

The functions and purposes of RQs differ, but the idea here is to enhance the use of language, speculate aloud as well as concede the fact that there are different types of RQs and these are used for different purposes. In effect, the RQ is a stylistic feature that can be used to enhance message effectiveness if only writers know how.

3. Statement of Research problem

Several studies have focused attention on different aspects of language use in the print media. For instance, Odejide (1976) examined the readability of Nigerian newspapers; Oyetunde and Umolu (1989) focused on reading errors of newspaper syntactically complex versus syntactically simple texts; Abioye (1991) examined satirical style in newspaper discourse; and Rasheed (1991) highlighted transitivity in newspaper language; but none of these authors or any other researcher has investigated whether the readers got the message, the effectiveness of the message or the readers' preference for a particular style. Newspaper texts are couched in stylistic forms that make the effectiveness of their messages suspect. Such texts employ language devices that characteristically over-task the proficiency levels of Nigerian readers. Specifically, (Osundare, 1986) has argued that newspapers use such over-challenging features like the rhetorical question, allegory and uncontextualized metaphors. There is a pervading unjustifiable assumption on the part of journalists/ media workers that their readers are already familiar with the stylistic devices used in media texts.

It is the view of the author of this study that most of these writers assume that all their readers should be able to dissect and ingest what they read. How this assumption came to be cultivated is difficult to trace. But some may even contest the claim of non-transmission of the intended message by the various write-ups. Indeed, the language features employed in media texts call for urgent reappraisal to gauge their effectiveness or lack of it. While few readers might break the norm of getting the substantive message, most of the run-of-the-mill readers arguably fall within that class of not getting much of the said message. This is connected to the level of proficiency of the reader in such a second language situation as Nigeria where English is learnt and used as a second language. Thus, this study has taken up the challenge of determining whether readers understand fully what they read as well as the extent to which the RQ helps in making the message effective. For instance, an article that condemns will be different in terms of style, content and message from one that commends or even serves as a tribute, except of course, if the writer is using the satirical style.

Since there is a middle ground between the writer and his audience, writers who would effectively and efficiently transmit their messages in linguistic, stylistic, and communicative situations are of utmost importance in the Nigerian literary scene. Are writers and readers aware of this? It is crucial that in addition to a relevant interaction between languages, the RQ and media texts, the message must be understood for it to be effective. There is therefore an urgent need to determine the effectiveness of media messages, which is identifying the factors that demarcate the boundary of effectiveness regarding media texts, the target audience/readers' level of proficiency in English and preference for a particular style. This is the gap this study intends to fill. In order to examine why readers prefer RQs and how the RQs contribute to the message, an Effectiveness Rating Instrument was designed, administered and the results were subjected to statistical analysis to validate the findings.

4. The Effectiveness Rating Instrument (ERI)

This instrument was designed by Abioye (2009) in order to elicit information on three categories of variables: socio-cultural data, pattern of newspaper reading, and message effectiveness as it concerns audience participation.

Socio-cultural Data: these covered variables such as sex, age, current employment and highest educational qualification; type of residence, marital status and monthly income.

Pattern of Newspaper Reading: this sought to identify the newspapers readers preferred; the major attractions in these papers, the frequency with which they read such preferred papers as well as the time of the day they preferred reading papers.

Measurement of Message Effectiveness: This formed the section where the RQ is described as a stylistic device sometimes used in place of a statement in order to re-energize media discourse and ensure a higher level of reader-friendliness. The strength of the ERI lies in the part where the text was presented in its original form with the RQ emphasized and readers were asked to assess the effectiveness of the RQ. Then, the same text was re-constituted and the RQ was substituted with a statement. Readers were required to compare the total effect of both texts. i.e. with and without the RQ as well as indicate their preference for one of the styles. This has provided a basis for comparison between the RQ and another option.

In order to discourage guessing, respondents were asked to give reasons for their answers. Rating scales in the form of rank-ordered responses were provided for this purpose. Responses to the ERI were analysed and interpreted using chi-square (X^2) and cross - tabulations (cross tabs) from the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) to determine whether the variables were statistically related or not. Thus, there is no table showing one item exclusively as this would not indicate the relevance of that item to respondents' preference for RQs. Parts of the data were merged based on these criteria: social contiguity and proportions. For instance, "effective" and "very effective" were merged and tagged "Effective", then "ineffective" and "very ineffective" were merged and called "Ineffective".

5. Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Data

Table 1: Relationship between Preference for RQ and Sex of Respondents (N=1,544)

With the Use of the RQs I consider the Total Effect of the Text:				
		Effective	Ineffective	Total
Sex of Respondent	Male	849 (55%)	185 (12%)	1,034 (67%)
	Female	402 (26%)	108 (07%)	510 (33%)
Total		1,251 (81%)	293 (19%)	1544 (100%)

Table 1 shows that more males preferred RQs than females. This may not be unconnected with the fact that the RQ is assertive and it tallies with the nature and image of males in the society. Also, at alpha level of 0.05 and at d.f of 3, the critical value of 7.815 is less than the calculated X^2 of 11.244, which shows that there is a significant relationship between preference for RQ and sex of respondents. In an earlier study, Abioye (2010) had noted a significant relationship between gender differentials and newspaper reading.

Table 2: Relationship between Preference for RQ and Age of Respondents (N=1,550)

With the Use of the RQs I consider the Total Effect of the Text:				
		Effective	Ineffective	Total
Age of Respondent	25 years or less	604 (39%)	171 (11%)	775 (50%)
	26-35 years	372 (24%)	62 (04%)	434 (28%)
	36 years and above	310 (20%)	31 (02%)	341 (22%)
Total		1,286 (83%)	264 (17%)	1,550 (100%)

Out of 1,550 who responded to the text, 1,286 (83%) preferred the RQ and only 264 (17%) said it was "ineffective" (Table 2). At alpha level of 0.05 and at d.f. of 2, the critical value of 5.991 is less than the calculated X^2 of 30.674. This shows that there is a significant correlation between preference for RQ and the age of respondents because it appears as if the older one gets, the more the preference for RQs in the African socio-cultural setting. This could probably be traced to the general belief that the elders are more exposed and as such, more conversant with various stylistic devices and that they would prefer an elevated or sophisticated style like the RQ in order to show their wealth of knowledge and experience.

Table 3: Relationship between Preference for RQ and Monthly Income (N=1,505)

With the Use of the RQs I consider the Total Effect of the Text:				
		Effective	Ineffective	Total
Monthly Income Group	40,000 or less	692 (46%)	211 (14%)	903 (60%)
	41,000 - 80,000	211 (14%)	30 (02%)	241 (16%)
	81,000 & above	331 (22%)	30 (02%)	361 (24%)
Total		86 (82%)	19 (18%)	1,505 (100%)

From Table 3, majority of those in N40, 000 or less income group (692; 46%) preferred the RQ as well as the respondents in the N81,000 and above income group (331; 22%). Some respondents, particularly students, traders, artisans and business men identified a group, but added that their income was not stable as it could sometimes be more or less. Many did not bother to respond to this item probably because they did not want to discuss their meager income or because they felt the researcher was prying into their privacy. Thus, at alpha level of 0.05 and d.f. of 2, the critical value of 5,991 is less than the calculated X^2 of 39.125, indicating that there is a significant relationship between preference for RQ and monthly income.

Table 4: Relationship between Preference for RQ and Frequency of Newspaper Reading (N=1,547)

With the Use of the RQs I consider the Total Effect of the Text:				
		Effective	Ineffective	Total
Frequency of Newspaper Reading	Frequently	464 (30%)	77 (05%)	541 (35%)
	Sometimes/Occasionally	712 (46%)	201 (13%)	913 (59%)
	Rarely/Never	77 (05%)	16 (01%)	93 (06%)
Total		1,253 (81%)	294 (19%)	1,547 (100%)

Table 4 shows that those who read newspapers “sometimes/occasionally” (712; 46%) far out-number those who either read “frequently” (30%) or “rarely/never” (05%). The group that preferred the RQ to the ASO is 1,253 (81%). This is indicative of the fact that frequency of newspaper reading does not translate to frequency of understanding. It is possible that due to the low socio-economic level of some of the respondents, or the amount of workload, they could neither read nor afford newspapers frequently, and they could not read at specific times. Thus, they read “anytime” and whenever or wherever the newspaper was available. At alpha level of 0.05 and at d.f. of 2, the critical value of 5.991 is less than the calculated X^2 of 62.832, which shows that there is a significant correlation between preference for RQ and respondents’ frequency of reading newspapers.

Table 5: Relationship between Preference for RQ and Respondents’ Patterns/Timing of Reading Newspapers (N=1,540)

With the Use of the RQs I consider the Total Effect of the Text:				
		Effective	Ineffective	Total
I read Newspapers anytime	Yes	758 (49.2%)	166 (10.8%)	924 (60%)
	No	516 (33.5%)	100 (6.5%)	616 (40%)
Total		1,274 (82.7%)	266 (17.3%)	1,540 (100%)

Respondents were asked to indicate specific times when they read newspapers, and out of the 1,540 respondents, 924 (60%) read newspapers “anytime” (Table 5). This means that they read newspapers whenever and wherever these papers could be found, or when they had a lighter workload. Out of the 1,540 respondents, 1,274 (82.7%) found the RQ to be effective while 266 (17.3%) found it ineffective. So, at alpha level of 0.05 and d.f. of 3, the critical value of 7.815 is less than the calculated X^2 of 155.727. This shows that there is a significant relationship between respondents’ reading pattern and their preference for RQs.

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined respondent’s preference for RQs as an index of textual message effectiveness. An examination of Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, shows that the majority of the respondents preferred the RQs to the ASOs. One may therefore conclude that the results of the comparison between readers who found the RQ effective and those who did not, (Tables 1-5) can be attributed to the inadequate exposure of readers to this specialized stylistic device. It is also not unconnected with the fact that interpretation involves the totality of the reader’s personal experiences, level of education, exposure, prejudices and English language competence generally. The results (Tables 1-5) and discussion show how effective the RQ is as the majority of the respondents found the RQ more effective in all the texts, than the ASO.

When respondents were asked to give reasons for the pattern of reading newspapers in free responses, interest and personal gratification came first, while some claimed they were hampered by financial constraints and for some, accessibility to these papers determined the pattern of reading. Some indicated their preference for electronic media (e-media); some go online to read and some gave irrelevant (IR) responses. From the cross tabulations, the RQ succeeds to a large extent as a factor in ensuring the effectiveness of the message. It allows readers to participate by questioning their views or opinions. It could even be used as a wake-up call. The major problem is the inadequate exposure to and sparing use of this stylistic device which should ordinarily encourage critical thinking and individual judgment/opinions.

The results also imply that reading activity is low. If this is so, then it follows that readers’ interpretative skills are also weak, restricted, peripheral and inadequate. The present study thus calls the attention of Nigerian language teachers, students, readers and writers to this specialized stylistic phenomenon that has been under – utilized and also contributes to the existing knowledge of language use in newspaper discourse. It has been argued that:

The fact is that some RQs look very much like genuine questions...the ultimate generalization will likely be somewhere between discourse strategies and idiosyncratic constructions (Lee-Goldman, 2006:9).

RQs embellish the level of language used and give the text polished, specialized and sophisticated elevation that is the hallmark of a good writer. In examining the RQ as indices of message effectiveness, it was observed that it has more impact on the reader than a conventional statement as it comes out as a strategy used in marshalling evidence, facts and information in one’s mind. It equally allows readers to participate in the “discussion”, so to say, by questioning their opinion. Clearly, the RQ is an effective instrument of rhetorical manipulation used for strategic effectiveness and which usually creates a deeper impression.

This study is representative of the average Nigerian newspaper reader who pores over print as if to cram, reads little and so experiences a little range/variety of texts; (writes even much less than he reads) and so is handicapped in terms of encounters with stylistic devices/options.

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APPENDIX

Effectiveness Rating Instrument

Dear Respondent,

I am carrying out a study to determine whether rhetorical questions contribute to the effectiveness of newspaper messages. Kindly answer these questions as accurately as you can. Please, do not write your names on this instrument.

Thank you for your assistance.

Researcher.

Part 1: Demographic data

Please tick () as appropriate

1. **Sex:** male [] female []
2. **Age:** (a) 16 – 20 years [] (b) 21-25 years old [] (c) 26 – 30 years old [] (d) 31 – 35 [] (e) 36 – 40 [] (f) 41 – 45 [] (g) over 45 years old []

3. Current Employment

- a) student []
- b) lecturer []
- c) Civil/Public Servant []
- d) Private company Employee []
- e) Self-employed professional (Accountant, Lawyer, Business etc) []
- f) Petty Trader/Artisan (Trader, Mechanic, etc) []
- g) Unemployed []

4. Highest Educational Qualification:

- a) Primary School Leaving Certificate []
- b) GCE “0”/ “A” Level []
- c) Diploma (please specify) []
- d) First degree (HND) []
- e) Higher degree (please specify) []

5. Ethnic Group: -----

6. Type of Residence: (a) 1-2 Room(s) “Face-me-Face you” [] (b) “Boys’ Quarters” [] (c) Block of flats [] (d) Bungalow/Duplex []

7. Monthly Income group:

- a) N10,000 or less []
- b) N11,000-20,000 []
- c) N21,000 – 30,000 []
- d) N31,000 – 40,000 []
- e) N41,000 – 50,000 []
- f) N51,000 – and above []

8. Marital Status

- (a) Single [] (b) Married [] (c) Divorced/ Separated [] (d) Widowed []

Part II: Pattern of Newspaper Reading

9. Frequency of Newspaper reading:

- (a) Frequently [] (b) Sometimes [] (c) Occasionally []
 (d) Rarely [] (e) Never []

10. Give reasons for your level of frequency of reading: -----

11. If you read newspapers, which of the following are your favourites? List the first three in order of preference i.e. 1,2,3

- The Guardian (2) The Punch [] Daily Trust [] This Day [] Tribune [] New Nigerian []
 The Vanguard [] Daily Times []

12. What are the major attractions in your favourite papers? List the first three in order of preference i.e.

- Sports [] Editorials [] Cartoons [] Headlines [] Obituaries [] Book Reviews []
 Health [] Science & Technology [] Features [] Politics [] Fashion [] Women []

**13. Usual period of the day that you read newspapers: Morning [] Afternoon [] Evening []
 Night [] Any time []**

14. Which one of the following do you gain from reading newspapers?

- a) Helps in forming my own opinion on particular issues []
- b) Able to assess two or more views []
- c) Able to argue with and/or persuade others on political issues []
- d) Entertains me with stories, cartoons and articles []
- e) Acquire more knowledge in health, science and technology []
- f) Up-to-date with books just published []
- g) Current information []
- h) Social interaction []

Part III: Effectiveness of the Message

15. One of the devices used by writers in passing the message to readers is the Rhetorical Question. (RQ), which usually does not expect an answer. This device is sometimes employed in place of a statement. The idea is to vary the style of presentation, give the message more weight, etc. e.g. “Who cares?” which means “nobody cares”.

**Please, read these extracts below (Texts Ia, Ib, IIa, IIb, IIIa, IIIb) and answer the questions that follow:
Text 1a: Ghost Workers**

The Minister of State for Finance, Alh. Jubril Martins-Kuye says the Federal Civil Service is infested and haunted by ghost workers ...rather than abate, this social malaise is like wild sea weeds, spreading and making dangerous foray into the federal public services at a scale formidable enough to disrupt payment of salaries for two whole months. And more remarkably at a time when government has given teeth to its determination to fight head-on the scourge of corruption by establishing the anti corruption law. **How daring can criminals be?** State governments are on record to have lost millions of Naira to this group of irritants particularly between 1983 and 1984. Ghost workers gave states, notably Kaduna, Kwara, Bauchi and Borno a good run for their money.

(The **New Nigerian Editorial**. Wednesday Sept 27, 2000. Pg 3)

- a. By the use of the Rhetorical Question (RQ) in text 1, I consider the total effect of the text:

- a) Very effective []
- b) Effective []
- c) Ineffective []
- d) Very ineffective []

- b. Give reasons for your choice: -----

-----It is possible for the message contained in the RQ to be presented in other ways. This means that the RQ is a stylistic option. Look at the other option carefully as it is now presented in Text 1b (the same text) not as a rhetorical question but as a statement. Please, treat Texts IIa and b, and Texts IIIa and b the same way.

16. Text 1b: Ghost workers

The Minister of State for Finance, Alh. Jubril Martins – Kuye says the Federal Civil Service is infested and haunted by ghost workers... Rather than abate, this social malaise is, like wild sea weeds, spreading, and making dangerous foray into the federal public service at a scale formidable enough to disrupt payment of salaries for two whole months. And, more remarkably, at a time when government has given teeth to its determination to fight head-on, the scourge of corruption by establishing the anti-corruption law. **Criminals can be daring!** State governments are on record to have lost millions of naira to this group of irritants particularly between 1983 and 1984. Ghost workers gave states notably Kaduna, Kwara, Bauchi and Borno a good run for their money.

Now that the RQ has been substituted with a statement, the total effect of the text, compared to 1a is:

- a) Very effective
- b) Effective
- c) Ineffective
- d) Very ineffective

17. Text II a: Expose “ghost workers” fraudsters

... Ghosts do not sign pay vouchers; nor can they go to the bank to cash pay cheques. Evidently, therefore, it is men and women, probably top civil servants, who have been defrauding the federal government of up to N15 billion monthly, posing as “ghost” staff. **Who are these fraudsters?** We challenge the FG to fish them out and reveal their identities (**The Punch Editorial**, Tuesday, Nov 14, 2000 pg 8).

a) By the use of the RQ in Text IIa, I consider the total effect of the text:

- a) Very effective []
- b) Effective []
- c) Ineffective []
- d) Very ineffective []

- b) Give reasons for your choice:-----

Kindly suggest any other option you can think of here -----

18. Text IIb: Expose “ghost workers” fraudsters

Ghosts do not sign pay vouchers; nor can they go to the bank to cash pay cheques. Evidently, therefore, it is living men and women, probably top civil servants, who have been defrauding the federal government of up to N15 billion monthly, posing as “ghost” staff. Nobody cares to know these fraudsters. We challenge the FG to fish them out and reveal their identities.

- a. Now that the RQ has been substituted with a statement, the total effect of the text, compared to Ia is:
 - a. Very effective
 - b. Effective
 - c. Ineffective
 - d. Very ineffective
 - c. Give reasons for your choice-----

- c. Kindly suggest any other option you can think of here.

19. Text III a: A hike too many

Let us face this bitter fact: there is no government in Nigeria. No government. True, we have a band of men and women in extravagant robes and with obscene bank accounts, and a loud swagger, gallivanting up and down the streets, making sure they are not only seen but heard... We hear them when the President, no doubt the supreme in the political pecking order, washes his hands free of the country’s educational mess, conscripting “god instead into his holy war against ASUU and others unpatriotic enough to press for a decent and functioning university system. On whose side is the Obasanjo government? Whose agenda is it so much at pains to execute? Does this government hear the battle cry in the market place? Does it, can it listen to the groans and whimpers of the people? You may hike the “pump price” of petrol to N1,000 a litre; Nigeria will remain poor and backward as long as those in position of power keep on stealing, squandering, and mismanaging public funds. What Nigeria needs more than anything else are appropriate wages for workers and appropriate spending by public officials.

- d. By the use of the Rhetorical Question (RQ) in Text IIIa, I consider the total effect of the text:
 - (a) Very effective []
 - (b) Effective []
 - (c) Ineffective []
 - (d) Very ineffective []
- e. Give reasons for your choice: -----

20. Text III b: A hike too many

Let us face this bitter fact: there is no government in Nigeria. No government. True, we have a band of men and women in extravagant robes and with obscene bank accounts, and a loud swagger, gallivanting up and down the streets, making sure they are not only seen but heard... We hear them when the President, no doubt the supreme in the political pecking order, washes his hands free of the country’s educational mess, conscripting “god instead into his holy war against ASUU and others unpatriotic enough to press for a decent and functioning university system. The Obasanjo government is clearly not on our side, because it does not appear to be executing the peoples’ agenda. This government does not seem to hear the battle cry in the market place. It has turned a deaf ear to the groans and whimpers of the people. You may hike the “pump price” of petrol to N1,000 a litre; Nigeria will remain poor and backward as long as those in position of power keep on stealing, squandering, and mismanaging public funds. What Nigeria needs more than anything else are appropriate wages for workers and appropriate spending by public officials.

- a. Now that the RQs have been substituted with statements, the total effect of the text compared to IIIa is:
 - a) Very effective []
 - b) Effective []
 - c) Ineffective []
 - d) Very ineffective []