

Exploring the Pertinence of Introduction in Writing as Readers' Drive in Developing Reading Zeal: A Review

Kolawole Mathew Ogundipe

Graduate Student, Department of Art Education (English), University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

Abstract: Some writers are not versed in putting down a strong introduction in their respective writing, or perhaps they are not aware of its importance in writing as a language skill. As a result of this, they occasionally, if not at all times, fail to motivate readers in reading their written or printed information. The writers' failure to stir up the readers' interest in reading leads to mind distancing of readers to the contents of such writers' texts, and in turn, causes the readers' misunderstanding and confusion in decoding the actual messages in such writing. This paper aims at providing answers to three questions, which are; 'How important is introduction to writing as a language skill? What are the notions of introduction in writing, or names that can be given to introduction in the context of writing? What strategies can writers use in writing a catchy introduction?' This paper also takes a picture of the readers' need of introduction to understanding the exact information of writers in the reading process. Different related studies are reviewed in order to bring out the importance of introduction in writing. This is done by intensive reading of the related literature to the topic. The explanations and instances that are given under different sections of this paper show the inevitability of introduction to writers in the process of putting down ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc.; and also to readers in reading what have been put down in written or printed forms by the writers.

Keywords: Writing, Reading, Introduction in Writing, Reading/Readers' Interest

I. INTRODUCTION

...after all, it is not by physical compulsion; whether I will read his/her writing or not, depends on the foreword of the writing.

Writing is a productive language skill which lies on the writers' wit to encode their intended messages before an effective communication takes place between them and their readers. On the other hand, reading is a receptive language skill that relies on the readers' scrupulousness to the messages embedded in a text before such messages are accurately figured out by them. Effective communication only takes place when two or more interlocutors understand one another. Therefore, writers in writing, as a communicative channel, must give a good preamble that will prepare their readers for the main body of their writing to achieve effective communication.

Communication is a crucial aspect of human endeavours, as it determines a mutual negotiation or understanding between

two or more people. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2003, as cited in Babatunde, 2007) gives a clear and simple definition of communication as "the process by which people exchange information or express their thoughts and feelings" (p.8). Chappell and W.L. (1984, as cited in Babatunde, 2007) define communication as a means by which a thought is transferred from one person to another. Communication can also be seen as a conscious or deliberate effort between two or more people, which is prompted by a particular purpose. The core purpose of communication is to propagate information through sequenced linguistic features (Onipede, 2018, quoted in Onipede, 2019). The purpose of any writing is to pass the messages of writers to those who read them, and who are interested in them. At this point, if the major purpose of communication is to share information between two or more people, and also, if writing is aimed at passing information which are to be read and understood by readers; have you ever paused, as a writer to ask the question, 'what is the importance of introduction in writing'? This paper will give a clear answer to this question by explaining the meaning of introduction in the context of writing, different notions of introduction in writing and strategies of writing a catchy introduction.

II. METHOD

The relevance of research methodologies lies in its capability to highlight and give essential training in the arrangement and collection of materials in a way that can be easily recognized (Saunders, 2011, cited in Meznah, 2018). This study is carried out based on a descriptive method, in which the researcher attempts to review previous studies and literature that will assist in probing the importance of introduction in writing. The collection of data will be done by reviewing the literature and studies that are related to the topic. Also, through an intensive study of the previously written articles, sections in text books on reading, writing, introduction as an element of the writing stage, and the applied knowledge of the writer of this paper; he comes up with different notions of introduction in writing.

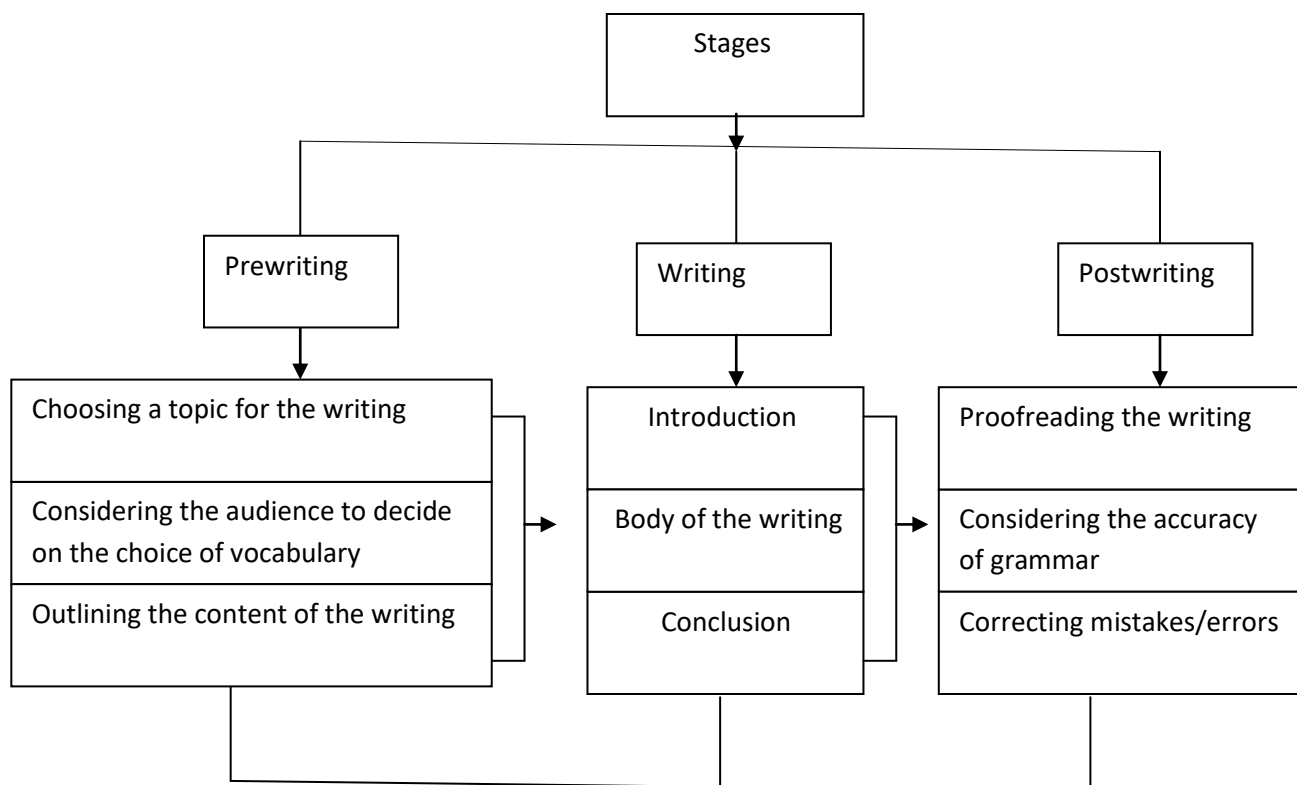
III. MEANING OF INTRODUCTION IN THE CONTEXT OF WRITING

Introduction is an essential part of the writing stage which can be described as a flash to the main events, messages or ideas

that a writer put down on paper, of which readers are expected to understand clearly. Introduction is an important element of the writing stage (Adedimeji, 2013). This is because it is a determining factor to the readers' decision, that is, whether they will read a written information or not; and if they decide to read, also determines whether they will attempt a mere reading or involve in painstaking reading of the information

embedded in the writing. There are three stages in writing as a language skill, these are: the prewriting stage, the writing stage and the postwriting stage. The stages in writing can be illustrated in a simpler form, so as to see the place of introduction in writing and its centrality to readers in understanding the details of any writing. The stages are presented in the figure below.

Figure 1
Stages in Writing



In the figure above, at the writing stage which is the concern of this paper, it is shown that introduction begins any writing. It is the readers' first contact in writing. Being the first part of the writing stage witnessed by readers, writers should be conversant of its significance in arousing the readers' interest in reading. According to Crystal (1999, as cited in Tyokase, 2007), reading is a complex process involving physiological and cerebral activities. As a result of its complexity to readers in decoding the ideas, thoughts or messages in writing, writers must structure the introduction in such a way that readers become inquisitive to read the whole text with seriousness, which will promote the readers' accurate comprehension of the written information being read. In the above definition of reading, there are two core words namely, 'physiological and cerebral'; these are adjectives qualifying the noun 'activities', that is, the readers' activities of decoding meanings from writing. The adjective 'physiological' refers to anything relating to the functions or actions of organs, cells, or tissues

of living things (human beings in this case) which are caused by external factors. For example, it relates to the action of a drug when given to a healthy person, as differentiated from its therapeutic action (Dictionary of English Grammar). Bringing the foregoing explanation to effect based on the aim of this paper, reading is an activity which readers are compelled to do as a result of what a writer has put in place at the introductory part of his or her writing. The second word, 'cerebral' is an adjective used to qualify anything relating to the brain or intellect. It could be inferred from the explanation of the two adjectives qualifying the noun, 'activities' that Crystal's definition depicts reading as an activity involving the evocation of the readers' readiness in reading what has been put down through the stimulus presented by a writer, which aids the readers' accurate judgement or comprehension of such writing. It is of this reason that introduction in writing must be well structured by a writer to prepare readers for the toilsome activities (as depicted in Crystal's definition of

reading) that are put before the readers of the writing. The Readers' willingness to read written information is the utmost important thing because, what mostly required in reading before comprehension takes place is readers' concentration, and the readers' concentration in reading can be achieved through their willingness to read (Ibrahim, 2013). Introduction helps in gaining the readers' willingness and concentration in reading; as it is the first part of writing that readers come across.

IV. NOTIONS OF INTRODUCTION IN WRITING

Looking at introduction in writing critically, there are different notions that can be attached to it; in other words, introduction can be given various names in the context of writing. In addition, these notions or names of introduction in writing, as a process and as a product of a writer's effort, have specific functions they perform through writers to readers in decoding meanings from written or printed information. The notions or names of introduction in writing, specifically as a product (i.e. written information to be read by readers) are enumerated and briefly discussed below.

- ✓ Introduction as the beginning of the writing.
- ✓ Introduction as the taste of the writing.
- ✓ Introduction as the presentation of the main points in the body of the writing
- ✓ Introduction as the background to the writing.
- ✓ Introduction as the intermediary between a writer and his or her readers.
- ✓ Introduction as the writer's knowledge of his or her audience.
- ✓ Introduction as the insight developed by readers about the content of the writing.

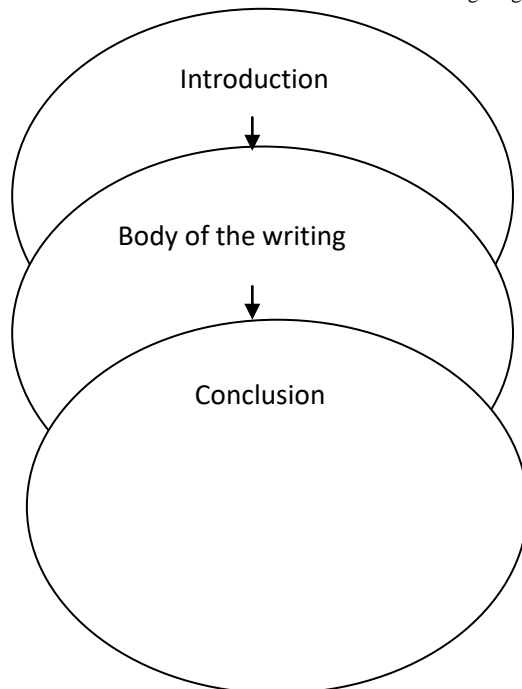
Introduction as the explanation of the core words in the title of the writing.

1 Introduction as the Beginning of the Writing.

The beginning of anything matters most because it determines the end product of it. The Holy Bible says, "If the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do? (Psalms11:3)". The word 'foundation' in the above bible quotation refers to the beginning of human's attempt in achieving a goal. As far as the purpose of this paper is concerned, foundation could also mean anything upon which some other things relied/rested, or that which determines the attainment of goals for doing a particular activity. The role of foundation, as expressed from these preceding definitions, is similar to the role of introduction in writing. In the writing stage, introduction comes first, and the makeup of it is a yardstick in measuring the readers' interest in reading. In Crystal's definition of reading, the word 'process' shows that reading comprises many steps to be taken by readers. In the same vein, writing is a process containing inextricable steps, starting from the prewriting, through the writing, to the postwriting stage. The first element to come in contact with at the writing stage is introduction, which stands as a steering that controls readers (to the end) in reading activities. The elements of the writing stage can be represented in a diagram as follows.

Figure 2

The Elements of the Writing Stage



The above figure can be called the hierarchical arrangement of the elements of the writing stage which portrays introduction as a prominent part of writing. Introduction is the readers' means to an end in reading, and the end product of any reading activity is the comprehension of the writer's messages. This is the major objective of any writer, in other words, the writer's intention of writing is to put down his or her messages on paper, and for these messages be exactly understood by his or her readers. Alabi (2013) says, "...it is only when the receiving end satisfactorily understands the intention of a speaker or writer, as the case may be, that we say effective communication has taken place (p.33)". So, introduction is a writer's starting point in writing (as a product) that helps such a writer and his or her readers to achieve the end.

2. *Introduction as the Taste of the Writing.*

Some food items that can be tasted for instance, have samples which the seller of such items does give to buyers to see how good the items are. After observing their good state, if the taste meets the needs of the buyers, they buy them; if on the other hand, does not meet the needs, they neglect them and go to another seller of the same items. Just as the taste of these items can make the buyers buy them or not, so also an introduction in writing does to readers, as it is the section of the writing stage that gives a bit of what is in the body of the writing. This bit determines whether the readers of the writing will continue the reading or not, and whether they will concentrate on the reading or not.

3. *Introduction as the Presentation of the Main Points in the Body of the Writing.*

Introduction is the part of the writing stage which gives a list of the main points to be discussed by a writer in the body of his or her writing; the main points of which serve as the focus of readers in reading a text, and help them to get the overall and precise messages of the writer, as they concentrate on them in reading. Of course, Ibrahim (2013) posits that the ability of the learners or readers in reading a text is to differentiate between the main points of the text and their supporting details. Hence, introduction is the part of writing where a writer specifies the main points of his or her writing so that readers will be able to distinguish them from the supporting information.

4. *Introduction as the Background to the Writing.*

Before a writer makes an attempt to write on a topic, there would surely be a certain reason that moved him in making decision to write on such topic, or a reason which is his or her stimulus to the writing. Introduction is a section of the writing stage where a writer gives explicit reason(s) or episode(s) that propelled him or her to write, which will create reading interest in readers to read the major information in the writing.

5. *Introduction as the Intermediary between a Writer and his or her Readers.*

As a person (third party) stands as a mediator between two business men/women or would-be couple in aiming for mutual agreement and cordial relationship, as the case may be, between them; introduction is the intermediary between a writer and his or her readers. This is because, it is the part of the writing stage that connects the readers' mind with the writer's own (i.e. his or her intended messages) in the reading process. One of the definitions of reading is that, it is a means of extracting written information, which involves penetrating the mind of the writer/author to decide his or her encoded meaning (Egwuogu, 1998, cited in Tyokase, 2007). A part of the writing stage which writers use to assist their readers in the activity of penetrating their mind to decide the specific information in the writing is introduction. It is used by writers as a linking tool which helps their readers to get to a point of agreement with them, that is, to comprehend the actual messages of the writers.

6. *Introduction as the Writer's Knowledge of his or her Audience.*

In Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, language is seen as a product of social practice (Mutunga & Ong'onda, 2020). The word, 'Systemic' in Systemic Functional Grammar, a branch of Systemic Functional Linguistics, portrays language as interrelated sets of options used for making meaning (Umiyati, 2019). In fact, the three broad functions of language called metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions), which are identified by Halliday and Matthiessen indicate that language is used for various purposes- to express human's experiences, interact with other people, and also, language is structured in a way that meets the needs of participants (writers and readers) in written communication (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004, cited in Umiyati, 2019). The above explanations imply that language contains collections of interrelated choices or lexical items whose characteristics and functionality are subjected to the context in which they are used. In other words, Halliday perceives language in his approach to language study as a concept that is not static in nature, but flexible; of which its usage is determined by the context (i.e. environment, people involved in communication, societal beliefs, norms, customs etc.). Writing, a language skill, requires a writer's savoir-faire to use linguistic features in the process of writing, in order to meet the readers' physical and psychological needs in the reading process. Introduction is the part of the writing stage where the writer's target readers can be known through his or her choice of lexical features. At the prewriting stage, Soyele (2007) suggests that writers should have in mind, the readers to whom the writing addressed. So, the writers' knowledge of their target readers is first manifested at the introductory part through the use of a certain parlance. In sum, introduction is the element of the writing stage where writers carefully use the lexical features of the language being used, based on the acquaintance or consideration of their readers to make

illustrations and examples existing in the readers' immediate environment, which will help them to fully grasp the main messages in the body of writing.

7. *Introduction as the Insight Developed by Readers about the Content of the Writing.*

Introduction is the element of the writing stage where a writer presents an overview of the content of his or her writing in order to promote the readers' in-depth knowledge of the major messages of the writing. It is a part of the writing stage that assists readers to guess the end of written information. It also helps readers to foretell the next content in the following segments of such writing. Ibrahim (2013) declares that readers' ability to predict the next content of succeeding portions of a text ensures that readers concentrate on the material being studied. Thus, introduction is the important section of the writing stage where readers have a clue of the whole content of writing.

8. *Introduction as the Explanation of the Core Words in the Title of the Writing.*

Also, introduction is the segment of a whole writing where a writer gives a clear and brief explanation/definition of the words in the title of the writing which are central to the writer's information directed to his or her readers.

V. PUTTING DOWN A CATCHY INTRODUCTION IN WRITING

Writing is a language skill that requires some strategies, rules and guidelines which a writer must strictly obliged to, in order to arrive at a successful end in passing his or her information to readers (Soyele, 2007). Soyele opines that writers need to equip themselves with the tools of writing such as vocabulary acquisition, mastery of grammar, knowledge of what to write, style to be employed in writing, how to start the writing and so forth (Soyele, 2007).

Reading is one of the four language skills whose tasks or activities are not easy to do (Telaumbanua & Umiyati, 2019). This calls for writers' need to make the tasks or activities interesting to readers through the use of a strong introduction. To write a motivated introduction, writers must possess sophisticated knowledge of the language in use and how to use the language in the preliminary stage of their writing to prepare their readers for the reading activities. Adedimeji (2013) itemizes five strategies of writing an attention-catching introduction in writing, these strategies are:

- Using a pertinent anecdote
- Commencing the writing with an arresting quotation
- Giving a synopsis of the major points in the body of the writing
- Explaining the specific occasion that prompted the writing
- Accentuating the subject matter of the writing

Besides these strategies identified by Adedimeji, writers can also use proverbs and idioms.

1. *Using a Pertinent Anecdote*

One of the ways of writing an interesting introduction is by starting with a short humorous account of an event which is topically related to the writing. There is a Yoruba maxim which says, "Isoro ni igbesi" that is, "one's manner of presenting one's speech determines the addressee's/listener's response". A well-structured funny expression at the beginning of writing promotes readers' concentration in reading.

2. *Commencing the Writing with an Arresting Quotation*

A writer can write an introduction from which readers' willingness to read can be evoked by referring to the already existing quotes of other knowledgeable scholars or people who have contributed immensely to both spiritual (religious) and worldly (scientific) knowledge. Making references which are related to the topic of the writing develops readers' enthusiasm in the reading process.

3. *Giving a Synopsis of the Major Points in the Body of the Writing*

A writer can also write an introduction which will serve as a driving force to readers in reading, through a concisely written account of the main points in the body of the writing. This helps the readers to focus in the reading, having known or familiar with the main points at the beginning of the writing.

4. *Explaining the Specific Occasion that Prompted the Writing*

Good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, evil or godly; there is always a specific reason behind every action of man. The main purpose of writing is to disseminate information which is expected to be understood by readers. One of the ways by which a writer assists his or readers is to state at the beginning of the writing; a brief explanation of what happened that prompted the writing. This enables readers to be moved in reading the main points in the body of the writing.

5. *Accentuating the Subject Matter of the Writing*

In the title of any writing, there will be a keyword from which the main purpose of the writing emerged. This stands as the subject matter of the writing. Punctuating this at the introductory segment of the writing helps to develop readers' interest, and also keeps them abreast of the writer's encoded meanings in the writing.

6. *Employing Proverbs and Idioms*

Making use of proverbs and idioms at the opening part of the writing stage develops readers' interest in reading the whole writing. Proverbs and idioms are sequences of words whose meanings are distant to their linguistic structures or forms. Using a structure of language whose semantic interpretation

goes beyond the literal meaning at the onset of the writing attracts the readers' attention to read the whole writing, as the structure entangles them because of the difficulty they encounter in getting the actual meaning of the structure. Therefore, they become serious and concentrate in the reading process so as to unveil the linguistic coverage used by a writer to encode his or her messages at the beginning of the writing.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on a critical study of the works of others on reading, writing and introduction as an element of the writing stage, the findings emanated from the explanations and illustrations below different subheadings of this paper thereafter, and definitions of the words that are essential to the title of this paper, the following suggestions are recommended for writers.

1. Writers should have their readers in mind when they are preparing for their writing at the prewriting stage.
2. They should acknowledge the importance of introduction whenever they are putting down their thoughts or messages for readers.
3. They should always start their writing with an interesting introduction that will make readers focus their eyes on the writing, and also prepare their minds for the main points in the body of the writing.

VII. CONCLUSION

Writing and reading are the literacy and secondary language skills that demand for a high level of a language user's competence before the user of a language can appropriately and proficiently use the language to encode and decode meanings, as the case maybe, in the process of writing and reading. The explanation of introduction as an element of the writing stage, and discussions of different headings and subheadings of this paper reveal that introduction occupies an indispensable position, because it equips readers with the background knowledge necessary for their proper preparation for the reading of the major points in the body of writing. This paper lists and briefly explains some notions of introduction in the context of writing, and strategies of writing an attention-arousing introduction that can promote the readers' ability to understand the writer's intended messages in the text being studied. In writing as a product, introduction could be in form of any of the notions or combination of two or more of the notions of it which are explained in this paper, depending on

the type of the writing. Finally, at this juncture, it is concluded that in any type of writing- letter, essay, creative or literature writing, and even textbooks, nothing can be substituted for the importance of introduction.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Adedimeji, M. (2013). Essay wring. In Alabi V. A, Babatunde, S.T, Adekola, F.A. (eds.), *The Use of English in Higher Education*(p.112 &114) . Ilorin: Unilorin Press.
- [2]. Alabi, T. (2013). Comprehension of Written Passages. In Alabi, V. A, Babatunde, S.T, Adekola, F.A. (eds.), *The Use of English in Higher Education* (p.33). Ilorin: Unilorin Press.
- [3]. Babatunde, A. (2007). Introduction to Communication. In Olakunle, F. (ed.), *Osiele Study Series* (p. 8) . Abeokuta: Gavima press.
- [4]. The Bible Society of Nigeria (2010). *The Topical Heading Holy Bible*. Lagos, p 604.
- [5]. Ibrahim, B. (2013). Developing Effective Study Habits and Skills. In Alabi, V. A, Babatunde, S.T, Adekola, F.A. (eds.), *The Use of English in Higher Education* (p. 13-14) . Ilorin: Unilorin Press.
- [6]. Meznah, A. (2018). Investigating the negative impact of pragmatic transfer on the acquisition of English Pragmatics as perceived by L2 learners: A review. *International Journal of English and Literature*, 9(3):19. Retrieved from <http://www.academicjournals.org/IJEL>.
- [7]. Mutunga, E.W, & Ong'onda, A.N. (2020). Liturgical Language in 'Christ is All' Catholic Prayer Book. *International Journal of English and Education*, 9(2): 14. Retrieved from ijee.org.vol9_issue_2.
- [8]. Onipede, F. M. (2019). Women libration in male-dominated society: A critical discourse analysis of Bayo Adebowale's "Lonely Days". *International Journal of English Research* , 5(1): 110.
- [9]. Soyele, R. (2007). Writing. In Olakunle, F. (ed.), *Osiele Study Series* (p. 276-277). Abeokuta: Gavima Press.
- [10]. Telaumbanua, T. A. E, & Umiyati, M. (2019). Readability of Reading Texts in Students Handbook at The Ninth Grade of SMP Negeri1 Telukdalam. *International Journal of SystemicFunctionalLinguistics*,2(2):71.Doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.22225.ijfsfl.2.2.1420.7> 1-18.
- [11]. The Dictionary of English Grammar, Android Phone Soft Application.
- [12]. Tyokase, M. (2007). The Concept of Reading, Types of Reading, Reading Faults and Reading Rate. In Olakunle, F. (ed.), *Osiele Study Series* (p. 162). Abeokuta: Gavima Press.
- [13]. Umiyati, M. (2019). Textual Metafunctions in Donald Trump's Speech" Recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's Capital". *International Journal of Systemic Functional Linguistics*, 2 (2):55-56. Doi: <http://dx.doi.org.10.22225/ijfsfl.2.2.1321.55-60>