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## A CORONER'S INQUEST IN EIGHT NEWSPAPER VERSIONS\*

*Josef Hladký*

When discussing the language of newspaper reporting, David Crystal and Derek Davy say that 'there is not one, but a number of "journalese" that can be found between the pages of the daily and weekly press; and while they do have a certain amount in common, their overall styles are very different' (1969.173). Their discussion of the language of two newspaper reports served as a partial inspiration for an attempt to find an event covered by as many dailies as possible and to analyse the language of the reports. The event chosen was a coroner's inquest into the death of a young girl parachutist that took place in Leeds on 15 May, 1975.

The following statistical analysis of eight newspaper reports covering the inquest is intended as purely linguistic. Therefore the texts are not reprinted here in their original form:<sup>1</sup> the size of the headlines, the use or non-use of sub-headlines, the number of photographs, and even the selection of facts are regarded as irrelevant for a linguistic analysis of the texts. They characterize the individual papers and they may be studied as part of the theory of journalism or they may be connected with some idea of quality in their readers' minds.

The texts are marked A to H and the sentences are numbered for easy references.<sup>2</sup>

The headlines are printed here as essential parts of the reports but they are not included in the analysis, as the language of headlines is different from the language of newspaper texts (Crystal and Davy 1969.180, Leech 1966.94).

### A NOVICE PARA GIRL DIED 'BECAUSE SHE PANICKED'

1 Marion Hogan, the girl who died on her first parachute jump, was wearing a chute that was wrongly packed.

2 When it failed to open she panicked, an inquest was told yesterday.

3 And instead of using her reserve parachute, she plummeted to the ground at more than 100 m.p.h.

4 'This need never had happened,' coroner Mr Deryck Walker said yesterday.

5 And after recording a verdict of misadventure he told the jury at Leeds that there was no question of criminal negligence.

6 Miss Hogan, a sales consultant of Manston Lane, Cross Gates, Leeds, died on April 27 – four days before her 21st birthday.

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\* Read in Buffalo, NY, in October 1980.

- 7 She jumped from a Cessna aircraft 2,500 feet over the Leeds Bradford Airport with two other novices from the local Free Fall Club.
- 8 Mr William Meacock, a member of the British Parachute Association training and safety committee, told the inquest that a static line from the plane opened her pilot chute and for the first five seconds of the fall everything was correct.
- 9 He said that normally a cord from the pilot chute then rips the sleeve cover off the main canopy and the parachutist floats to earth.
- 10 But on this occasion the cord was attached to the wrong place. 11 It was fastened directly to the main chute instead of the cover and the chute failed to open.
- 12 He said the only reason this could have happened was that someone changed the pilot chute and attached the substitute incorrectly.
- 13 But he added: 'There was no reason for the reserve chute not opening.'
- 14 Pathologist Dr Michael Green said Miss Hogan died from shock and haemorrhage caused by multiple injuries. 15 He said the most likely reason why she had not operated the reserve parachute was because she panicked.
- 16 The dropping-zone controller on the day was Mr Richard Reiter, 30, of Ashgarth Court, Harrogate, Yorkshire, who said: 'I saw Miss Hogan leave the aircraft and I saw the pilot chute open but the main canopy stayed in the sleeve.
- 17 'At first she was horizontal, but then she went into a vertical position with her arms spread out. 18 She made no attempt to operate the reserve parachute.'
- 19 The inquest was told that anyone jumping with a parachute is instructed to count to five after leaving the aircraft before checking if the main canopy has spread. 20 If not they operate the reserve chute . . .
- 24 The three people involved in the packing of Miss Hogan's parachute were Michael Inglehearn, 20, of . . . , Paul Wagner 21, of . . . , and Brian Pickersgill, 41, of . . .
- 25 All three hold BPA packing certificates — and each denies attaching the faulty cord to the canopy instead of the sleeve.
- 26 Mr Wagner said: 'I would expect the person who closed the pack, Michael Inglehearn, to check the cord.'
- 27 Mr Inglehearn said: 'I was not told when I got my packing certificate to check the cord attachment. 28 This should be checked by a qualified rigger.'
- 29 And Mr Pickersgill said: 'All I did was to make sure all the lines to the canopy were clean and straight.'
- 30 Since the accident the BPA have held an inquiry which recommended that the cords should be sewn to the canopy sleeve and that final checks by packers should include an inspection of the cord.

## **B PANIC MAY HAVE KILLED GIRL PARACHUTIST**

- 1 Miss Marian Anne Hogan, 20, a sales consultant, of Crossgates, Leeds, who fell 2,500ft to her death in her first parachute jump, may have lost her life because she panicked, the coroner, Mr Deryck Walker, commented yesterday at the Leeds inquest.
- 2 The accident happened over the Leeds and Bradford Airport last month when Miss Hogan and two other young people took off in a single-engine Cessna aircraft to make descents. 3 Her body was found in a field a mile from the airfield.
- 4 The coroner said the training Miss Hogan received was conducted in accordance with the minimum laid down by the British Parachute Association.
- 5 The parachute pack was broken open by the static line and the sleeve failed to leave the canopy of the parachute, he said.
- 6 Miss Hogan fell to the ground without making any attempt to activate the reserve parachute.
- 7 The reserve parachute, operated by a ripcord, was "a simple procedure," said the coroner, "but possibly due to panic — she was not in the air for long — she did not operate it. 8 It might have saved her life."
- 9 Mr William John Meecroft, a member of the British Parachute Association's safety and training committee, said it had been found that the bridle cord of the pilot parachute was attached to the main apex of the canopy instead of to the top of the sleeve.
- 10 "That is really the crux of this. 11 It would have caused the parachute to malfunction.
- 11 "Those concerned with the checking are unable to explain why the bridle cord had been connected to the top of the canopy and why they had failed to notice this."
- 13 The coroner said there was no question of criminal negligence. 14 The evidence of the parachute packers had been vague. 15 "If everybody had done their jobs properly this accident need not have happened. . . ."
- 17 Returning a misadventure verdict, the jury additionally recommended that the parachute

packing procedure should be tightened and that the bridle cord attachment should be examined by "some definite person."

### C PARACHUTE PACKING 'WRONG'

1 Safeguards at parachute clubs will be tightened following an inquest at Leeds yesterday on Miss Marian Hogan, 20-year-old sales consultant, who died on her first parachute jump. 2 The jury was told that her main parachute, which failed to open automatically, had been wrongly packed.

3 Miss Hogan, of Manston Lane, Leeds, failed to pull the ripcord on her reserve parachute. 4 She fell 2,500ft. to a field a mile from the Leeds-Bradford airport at Yeadon. 5 She had begun ground training only six weeks previously.

6 The jury returned a verdict of misadventure and recommended that procedure for parachute packing at the Leeds and Bradford Free-Fall Club be tightened. 7 On the advice of the coroner, Mr Deryk Walker, the jury accepted that there had been no criminal negligence.

8 Mr Frank Peel, of Liversedge, chief instructor at the Leeds-Bradford club, said when the main parachute was examined it was found that the bridle cord linking the small pilot parachute had been wrongly attached to the top of the main canopy. 14 It should have been attached to the top of the sleeve to cause a streamer action and pull out the main parachute. 15 The attachment should have been checked before the pack was closed.

16 Mr Michael Inglehearn, aged 20, of Leventhorpe Lane, Bradford, who holds a BPA packing certificate, closed the pack.

17 He said he had been told of no check involving the bridle cord.

18 Mr Richard Reiter, of Ash Garth, Harrogate, drop zone controller, said after the parachute failed to open Miss Hogan had made no attempt to bring her arms or hands in to open the reserve parachute.

19 The jury was also told that in her training Miss Hogan had undergone the full emergency procedure in a suspended harness.

20 Mr Walker said the accident need not have happened . . .

### D PANIC COULD HAVE KILLED PARA-GIRL, SAYS CORONER

1 A woman on her first parachute jump failed to use the reserve 'chute when her main one did not open, said Mr James Walker, Leeds District Coroner, at a resumed inquest yesterday.

2 The death of 20-year-old Marian Anne Hogan, who fell 2,500ft. to her death, has resulted in recommendations to tighten up parachute packing and checking procedures.

3 The inquest heard that Miss Hogan, of Manston Lane, Cross Gates, Leeds died on April 27 during her first parachute jump.

4 Her main canopy failed to open properly and possibly due to panic she made no attempt to deploy her reserve parachute.

5 Her body was found in a field a mile from Leeds-Bradford airport, where moments before she had taken off as a member of the Leeds and Bradford Free Fall Club in a Cessna aircraft with two other student parachutists.

6 Dr. Michael Green, Senior Lecturer in Forensic Medicine at Leeds University, said Miss Hogan had died of shock and haemorrhage due to multiple injuries.

7 The eight-man jury returned a verdict of death by misadventure and endorsed the recommendations made by a British Parachute Association inquiry.

8 The head of the inquiry, Mr William Meacock, from Peterborough, a member of the BPA Safety and Training Committee, told the inquest that he convened the hearing the day after the accident.

9 He inspected the parachute which was opened by a static line, used by Miss Hogan and found that the bridle cord had been attached from the pilot 'chute to the apex of the main canopy instead of from the pilot 'chute to the sleeve. 10 This could have caused the canopy to malfunction and fail to open properly. . . .

15 Mr Meacock said that he felt the recommendations would help to prevent similar accidents. 16 He said Miss Hogan's main canopy was pulled through the top of the sleeve instead of the sleeve being pulled back off the canopy.

17 The jury, as well as endorsing the recommendations said that the section of the application form to join any club affiliated to the BPA which exonerates the club and the Association from action in case of an accident, should be deleted.

18 The jury foreman said no one should be expected to sign it.

19 It meant that the applicant could not make any claim against either organisation under any circumstances. . . .

22 The chief instructor and inspector at the Leeds and Bradford Free Fall Club, Mr Frank Peel, said when he inspected Miss Hogan's parachute after the accident, he found that the pilot chute was a square one. 23 It should have been round.

24 "We replaced all the pilot chutes sometime ago with round ones because they are more efficient.

25 "I can't understand how she had a square one or how it should have been wrongly attached."

26 He said he had issued certificates to the three packers who had been involved with Miss Hogan's parachute, to say they were qualified.

27 Mr Michael Inglehearn of Thornton, Bradford, a member of the club, told the inquest that he had been packing parachutes all day on the day Miss Hogan died.

28 He said he stretched the parachute out under tension and folded the canopy straight. 29 He put the canopy into the pack and attached the static line and closed the pack. 30 He said he did not notice the fault in the parachute and had no idea how it happened. . . .

35 Brian Pickersgill, of Cookridge, Leeds, told the inquest he also helped to pack the parachute Miss Hogan was later to use. 36 He said he was responsible only for the four line check which ensured all the lines from the canopy to the harness were straight and untangled.

37 The coroner said that there seemed to be some vagueness about whose responsibility it was to check the bridle cord.

38 He said the method of packing a parachute at the Leeds and Bradford Free Fall Club suffered from a lack of continuity and there was scope for improvement.

#### **E BLUNDER THAT KILLED PARA GIRL — Parachute was wrongly packed**

1 Yesterday a coroner criticised the "young and inexperienced" packers of the parachute — and his inquest jury asked for a tightening up of procedures and checks by senior parachutists.

2 The inquest at Leeds heard that Marian Hogan might have saved herself by pulling a cord that would have opened a reserve chute but she didn't.

3 The coroner, Mr Deryck Walker, said: "In all probability she panicked." . . .

5 Marian, who trained with the Leeds and Bradford Free Fall Club, had gone up in a Cessna aircraft for her debut jump.

6 A "static line" should have opened her main parachute — but the chute jammed.

7 A pilot chute which pulls out the main parachute was attached to the wrong part of the pack.

8 Two men involved in the packing of the parachute were Paul Wagner, aged 21, of Gomersal, Yorks, and Michael Inglehearn, 20, of Thornton, Bradford.

9 Mr Wagner said a check on the pilot chute was "not laid down."

10 On the fatal day he did not check the pilot chute. 11 He would have expected Mr Inglehearn to do this.

12 Mr Inglehearn said he knew of no checks on the bridle cords attacking the pilot chute.

13 Mr Frank Peel, the club's chief instructor, said he "hadn't a clue" how the chute had been wrongly attached.

14 The coroner said: "This accident need not have happened. 15 I notice the people who did the packing were young and inexperienced."

16 The jury returned a misadventure verdict and recommended that chutes should be packed by one person only — and then checked by someone more experienced.

#### **F RIDDLE OF SWOPPED PARACHUTE — Did thief's knot lead to girl's death dive?**

1 Who interfered with a parachute whose failure cost a young girl her life?

2 Who removed the efficient pilot-chute and substituted a less efficient type?

3 Who, in doing so, wrongly attached the pilot-chute cord — so that in use it would not open to pull out the main chute?

4 These questions were raised — but could not be answered at the Leeds inquest yesterday on Marion Hogan who plunged 2,500 feet to her death on her first jump just four days before her 21st birthday.

5 A private inquiry by the British Parachute Association did not solve the riddle.

6 Coroner Mr Deryck Walker was told the private inquiry had discovered a cord running from a small square pilot-chute had been incorrectly attached to Marion's main parachute.

7 Questioned by Mr Guy Sutton, representing the B.P.A. and the Leeds-Bradford club, of which Marion was a member, Mr Frank Peel, the club's parachute instructor, said he had never heard of a similar accident caused by a wrongly attached cord.

8 He agreed that a semi-circular pilot-chute was better than the square type and thought Marion's parachute had one.

9 Mr Sutton: "Do you think it is possible that someone decided they wanted a round-top 'pilot' and substituted a square one for it?"

10 Mr Peel: "I think it is very possible."

11 Mr William Meacock, chairman of the B.P.A. inquiry, which recommended more stringent checks on parachute packing, said the cord could only be attached improperly if the pilot-chute had been removed or changed.

12 Later Mr Sutton, who has made more than 600 parachute jumps himself, said the club still did not know how the square pilot-chute came to be attached to the one which Marion used . . .

14 "The suggestion is that somebody might have pinched it to improve their own equipment. 15 So far as the club knows the parachute would have a round top, not a square one, when it was originally obtained."

16 The jury was told that Marion had not used the reserve parachute. 17 Instructor Christopher Lyle said she may have panicked and "switched off."

18 The coroner told the jury: "No one in my view can be singled out as criminally negligent."

19 Verdict: Misadventure.

## G PARACHUTE OF DEAD GIRL WAS PACKED WRONGLY

1 Safeguards at Britain's 35 parachute clubs are expected to be tightened after an inquest at Leeds yesterday into the death of a girl aged 20, who was making her first parachute jump.

2 The jury at the inquest on Miss Marian Hogan, a sales consultant, of Manston Lane, Leeds, was told that her main parachute failed to open automatically because it had been wrongly packed. 3 Probably through panic, it was said, she failed to pull the ripcord on her reserve parachute and fell 2,500ft to a field.

4 Miss Hogan started her ground training six weeks before her jump on April 29, four days preceding her twenty-first birthday.

5 The jury, returning a verdict of misadventure, recommended that procedure for packing parachutes at the Leeds and Bradford Free Fall Club should be tightened. 6 On the advice of Mr J. D. Walker, the coroner, they accepted that there was no criminal negligence involved in Miss Hogan's death.

7 Mr William Meacock, of the safety and training committee of the British Parachute Association, who headed an inquiry into the accident, said he would pass on the jury's recommendations. 8 As a result of the inquiry three recommendations had been made which would be circulated to the country's 35 clubs, with their 6,000 members, he said.

9 He would also pass on a recommendation by the jury that an indemnity clause in the membership application form, which releases the club from any injury-claim, should be deleted.

10 In his summing up Mr Walker said the accident need not have happened . . .

## H PARAGIRL KILLED BY PANIC IN PLUNGE

1 A girl died on her parachute jump because she panicked when her main chute failed to open.

2 An inquest heard yesterday that Marian Hogan's chute didn't open because a piece of equipment had been wrongly packed.

3 But as she plunged towards the ground at 100 mph Marian, of Manston Lane, Leeds, had twelve seconds in which to pull a cord and operate her reserve chute.

4 Pathologist Dr. Michael Green told the inquest: "The most likely reason she did not pull the reserve chute was panic due to her inexperience."

5 Mr. Frank Peel, chief instructor of the Leeds and Bradford Free Fall Parachute Club, said the malfunction in the main chute was caused by the wrong rigging.

6 It was possible, he said, that someone had swapped a piece of equipment on the chute but had put on the substitute piece wrongly.

7 The reserve chute was found to be in perfect working order after Marian's 2,500ft death plunge, four days before her 21st birthday.

8 The inquest jury at Leeds returned a verdict of misadventure on Marian, who was born in Ardglass, Co. Down, Northern Ireland.

9 Coroner Mr James Walker said: . . .

Although the text are not printed here in full,<sup>3</sup> it is obvious that they differ in length. The shortest text, H, is only 201 words long while the longest text, D, contains 843 words. (All words, including articles, abbreviations, and proper names, were counted.) The differences in length do not affect the statistics, which are based on percentages, but H, and even E and G, are rather short and some of the data relating to them have to be taken as approximate.

Table 1. *Number of words in a text*

H	E	G	B	F	C	A	D
201	277	285	362	374	436	582	843

The first unit of the text to be analysed is the paragraph. It is generally known that paragraphs in newspapers are very short. But even in this respect there are differences between the texts: Table 2 shows that the average paragraph in C is more than twice as long as the average paragraph in E. The second line in Table 2 gives the widths of the columns in the dailies concerned. In most cases, the wider the column, the more words there are in a paragraph. The relation between the two sets of data, however, is not that simple. The third line in the table shows that papers with wider columns usually have more lines per paragraph.<sup>4</sup> All this shows that the length of the paragraphs is a matter of editorial tradition and policy, even if non-editorial influence cannot be overlooked.

Table 2. *Paragraphs*

	E	F	H	A	D	B	G	C
words	19.78	22.00	22.33	24.25	31.22	32.90	40.71	43.60
width of column	36 mm	40 mm	32 mm	40 mm	40 mm	47 mm	46 mm	46 mm
lines	4.92	5.23	6.50	5.66	7.14	6.90	8.50	9.30
contextual dependence in per cent	0.0	17.6	11.1	50.0	29.6	9.0	14.2	0.0

The above lengthy discussion of partly non-linguistic aspects of the paragraphs has linguistic reasons: the contextual dependence of paragraph openings.<sup>5</sup> As the last line in Table 2 shows, the degree of contextual dependence in our texts is not always in proportion to the length of the paragraph. It is true that the texts with longer paragraphs have a lower, or zero percentage of dependence, but E, with the shortest paragraphs, also reveals zero dependence, while the highest dependence, 50 per cent, is found in A, whose paragraphs are longer than those of E. Contextual-dependence figures reflect the organization of the whole report. The paragraph openings in E are as follows (leaving out the adverbials): *the inquest - the coroner - Marian - a static line - a pilot chute - two men - Mr Wagner - Mr Inglehearn - Mr Frank Peel - the coroner*. Nearly each paragraph then tells a part of the story while in A (*and - this*

— *and* — *she* — *he* — *but* — *he* — *but* — etc.) the parts of the story are split into more paragraphs.

The next unit after the paragraph is the sentence. The relation between paragraphs and sentences is summarized in Table 3. In half the texts there is little difference between the number of paragraphs and the number of sentences and in one case, H, every sentence is printed as an independent paragraph. (Direct speech and the accompanying reporting clause are viewed as part of one sentence; the reasons for this are given in the comment on Table 6.)

Table 3. *Number of sentences in paragraphs*

H	F	E	A	D	B	G	C
1.0	1.11	1.14	1.25	1.40	1.54	1.71	2.3

Table 4 characterizes the texts as to the length of sentences by stating the average number of words in an average sentence. The scale ranges from 17 words to over 23 words and is narrower than the scale of the paragraph length in Table 2. Text H, where a sentence equals a paragraph, has the second longest sentences, and C, with the highest number of sentences in a paragraph, has the second shortest sentences.

Table 4. *Number of words in a sentence*

E	C	A	F	B	D	H	G
17.31	18.52	19.40	19.68	21.29	22.18	22.33	23.75

The average length of a sentence in all the eight texts is 22.8 words (168 sentences contain 3,738 words), a result slightly higher than that in Kučera and Francis (21.3), partly influenced by the treatment of direct speech.<sup>6</sup>

The sentences are further divided into clauses, the first step being a simple comparison of the average number of clauses in a sentence. (Constructions with non-finite verbal forms as condensers (cf. Vachek 1961) were counted as clauses but appositions were not counted.)

Table 5. *Number of clauses in a sentence*

C	E	B	G	A	H	D	F
2.21	2.25	2.41	2.50	2.53	2.66	2.89	3.00

Next come the relations between clauses, i.e. coordination and subordination. (The constructions with condensers are included in the results according to their function in the sentence.) Table 6 operates with the percentage of subordinate clauses: E and B seem to have the simplest structures of the eight versions. There are two points, however, that should be mentioned here. (i) The reports



cover an inquest, where many questions were asked and answered. This fact itself gives the texts a specific character. The questions and the answers appear in the reports as direct or indirect speech in varying degrees (see the second line of Table 6). As the choice between the two is not linguistically based, no distinction is made between direct and indirect speech in the statistics. The last line of Table 6 shows that the scale of subordination percentages, without direct and indirect speech, is rather narrow. The higher figure for H is an exception and may be interpreted according to the following point. (ii) The calculation for H is based on 24 clauses only, that for G on 30 clauses and those for E and B on 36 and 41 clauses. With these low numbers the analysis has to be understood as indicating the possibilities rather than giving fully reliable data.

Table 6. *Share of subordinate clauses (in per cent)*

	E	B	A	C	D	H	G	F
(a) all types	44.4	46.3	51.9	52.9	53.6	54.1	56.6	59.6
(b) direct and indirect speech	22.2	22.0	24.7	27.4	30.0	16.6	30.0	29.8
(c) other than (b)	22.2	24.3	27.2	25.5	23.6	37.5	26.6	29.8

The next step should be to break down the overall number of subordinate clauses into categories according to the type of clause. In the present analysis, however, no reliable data can be drawn from the low numbers of clauses in the texts. Let us at least enumerate the types of clauses found in the texts, beginning with the more frequent ones: objective clauses (i.e. direct and indirect speech), defining relative clauses, adverbial clauses, attributive clauses (other than defining relative), subjective clauses.

Not included in any of the statistics up to now are appositions, a frequent phenomenon in journalese. There are 33 instances in the eight reports, so that a few quotations representing the types are preferred to any statistical data based on insufficient cases. The main person in the inquest is described as *the coroner, Mr Deryck Walker* (B 1, E 3), *Mr J. D. Walker, the coroner* (G 6), or *coroner Mr Deryck Walker* (A 4, F 6, H 9). We also meet *Pathologist Dr Michael Green* (A 14, H 4), *Instructor Mr Christopher Lyall* (A 21), *Instructor Christopher Lyle* (F 17), *Mr Frank Peel, chief instructor* (C 13), and *Mr Frank Peel, the club's chief instructor* (E 13).

Another aspect of the sentence structure which would require longer texts for statistical analysis is the degree of condensation, i.e. the relation of constructions with condensers to clauses with finite verbs. Degree of condensation can be used in contrastive studies or in the characterization of texts within the same language. The degree of condensation for the eight texts as a whole is 6.3 per cent. (A sample of English books for children between 6 and 9 years of age revealed 7.5 per cent of condensation and a sample of literary prose produced between 31 and 49 per cent, cf. Ševečková 1985:87, Hladký 1961:112.)<sup>7</sup>

As far as word order is concerned, two phenomena, said to be used in journalese, should be mentioned: inversion and the position of adverbials. Inversion does not occur in any of the reports. The positioning of adverbials is easy to survey: seven of the sentences introducing the inquest have 'yesterday' after the verb and one has it before the verb (E 1). The reports, however, are not rich in

adverbials and once again no statistics can be made. Some of the adverbials seem to be interesting either positionally or lexically: *On the fatal day...* (E 10), ... *airport, where moments before she had taken off...* (D 5), *the jury additionally recommended...* (B 17), *She had begun ground training only six weeks previously* (C 5).

One of the texts contains a subjunctive: *The jury recommended that procedure... be tightened* (C 6). Two other texts use *should* after 'recommend' (D 17, G 9).

There is no overabundance of premodifiers in the texts. The longest string is *parachute packing record card* in D 12, the other strings being shorter: *parachute packing certificate* (G 11), *four line check* (D 36), *pilot chute cord* (F 3); but also a *cord from the pilot chute* in A 9), *membership application form* (G 9), *drop zone controller* (C 18; also *dropping-zone controller* in A 16, C 18), *single-engine Cessna aircraft* (B 2), *parachute packing procedure* (B 17; but also *procedure for parachute packing* in C 6). Proper names and names of organizations mentioned during the inquest also supply strings of premodifiers: *Leeds and Bradford Free Fall Club*, *Leeds Bradford Airport*. A committee is referred to as *the British Parachute Association training and safety committee* (A 8), *the British Parachute Association's safety and training committee* (B 9), *the safety and training committee of the British Parachute Association* (C 8, G 7), and *the BPA Safety and Training Committee* (D 8).

Many of the nominal pairs are technical terms, e.g. *pilot chute*, *bridle cord*. Other pairs are *ad hoc* formations, e.g. *Leeds inquest* (B 1, F 2), *misadventure verdict* (B 17, E 16). There are, however, of-phrases in the same functions: *a verdict ~ of misadventure* (A 5, C 6, G 5, H 8), *the top of the canopy* (B 12). No statistical data are offered on the relation between premodification and postmodification because the texts do not yield enough instances.

The first point in the discussion of the lexical side of the reports deals with the types of lexical units used. There is non-standard *swap* (H 6), informal *pinch* (in direct speech, F 14), and technical *apex* (B 9) or *malfunction* (B 11, D 10, H 5). Miss Hogan is reported to have jumped together with *two other young people* (B 2), *two other student parachutists* (D 5), or *two other novices* (A 7). It was *her first parachute jump* (A to D 1, G 1), *her first jump* (F 4) but also *her debut jump* (E 5).

A survey of lexical units used in the description of the accident is given in Table 7, where the reports are arranged from the more technical ones to the less technical ones. The last column (and the inclusion of the headlines) also reveal some non-linguistic information about the selection of facts and about the suggestions made in the inquest.

Table 8 contains (a) the total number of words in each text, repeated from Table 1, (b) the number of words without proper names and abbreviations (the reason being that the length and the choice of proper names is given), and (c) the number of unrepeated words (the vocabulary of each text). The percentage of repetition has been calculated from (b) and (c) and is in proportion to the length of the text, as expected.

The length of word is calculated in two ways: (i) as written, where the unit is a letter, (ii) as spoken, where the unit is a syllable. The limits of the scale for unrepeated words according to (i) (Table 10) are slightly narrower than those for all words in a text (Table 9). This can be explained by the fact that Table 9 records every occurrence of every short word in a text.

Table 7. Terminology

A	NOVICE PARA GIRL DIED 'BECAUSE SHE PANICKED'	static line	pilot chute	cord	attach, fasten	sleeve cover	—
B	PANIC MAY HAVE KILLED GIRL PARACHUTIST	static line	pilot parachute	bridle cord	attach, connect	top of the sleeve	top
C	PARACHUTE PACKING 'WRONG'	—	small pilot parachute	bridle cord	attach	top of the sleeve .	—
D	PANIC COULD HAVE KILLED PARA-GIRL, SAYS CORONER	static line	pilot 'chute	bridle cord	attach, connect	sleeve	top, apex
E	BLUNDER THAT KILLED PARA GIRL Parachute was wrongly packed	"static line"	pilot chute	bridle cord	attached to the wrong part of the pack		
F	RIDDLE OF SWOPPED PARACHUTE Did thief's knot lead to girl's death dive?	—	pilot chute	cord	attached wrongly, incorrectly		
G	PARACHUTE OF DEAD GIRL WAS PACKED WRONGLY	the main parachute had been wrongly packed					
H	PARAGIRL KILLED BY PANIC IN PLUNGE	a piece of equipment had been wrongly rigged					

Table 7. Terminology

main canopy, main chute	pull	cord	operate	reserve (para)chute	she plummeted to the ground at more than 100 m.p.h.	pilot chute was changed	A
main apex, canopy	-	ripcord	activate, operate	reserve parachute	she fell 2,500ft to her death	-	B
main canopy	pull	ripcord	open	reserve parachute	she fell 2,500ft. to a field	-	C
main canopy	-	-	activate, deploy	reserve (para)'chute	she fell 2,500ft. to her death	pilot chute square, not round	D
main parachute	pull	cord	open	reserve 'chute	she was sent plunging 2,500 feet to her death, she hurtled to her death	-	E
main parachute	-	-	use	reserve parachute	she plunged 2,500 feet to her death	a square 'pilot' substituted for a round one	F
-	pull	ripcord	-	reserve parachute	she fell 2,500 ft to a field	-	G
main chute	pull	cord	operate	reserve chute	she plunged towards the ground at 100 mph	a piece of equipment was swapped	H

Table 8. *Words*

	H	E	G	B	F	C	A	D
(a) total number	201	277	285	362	374	436	582	843
(b) without proper names	172	239	257	337	338	383	505	776
(c) unrepeated	95	123	139	168	160	176	206	260
repetition (in per cent)	44.76	48.53	45.53	50.14	52.66	54.04	59.20	66.49

Table 9. *Length of all words as written*

H	E	D	A	F	C	B	G
4.39	4.42	4.50	4.51	4.55	4.66	4.74	5.34

Table 10. *Length of unrepeated words as written*

H	E	F	A	G	B	C	D
4.90	4.91	5.19	5.44	5.44	5.48	5.57	5.63

In the other approach to word length, based on pronunciation, three criteria are employed: the average length of words, the percentage of monosyllables and the percentage of monosyllables and disyllables taken together. In Table 11, recording all words in each text, the three criteria produce very similar ordering of the texts, the only exception being C and G in the third line. The scales for unrepeated words (Table 12) do not reveal the same uniformity. The ordering is different in every line, the only stable texts being H and E.

Table 11. *Length of all words as spoken*

	A	E	H	D	F	C	G	B
average length (in syllables)	1.32	1.34	1.36	1.42	1.43	1.46	1.50	1.51
share of monosyllables (in per cent)	76.6	75.8	73.8	72.9	72.2	70.2	68.5	67.9
share of mono- and di-syllables	93.2	92.1	91.8	89.1	88.8	86.1	86.8	84.2

Table 12. *Length of unrepeated words as spoken*

average length (in syllables)	H 1.47	E 1.52	G 1.54	F 1.60	A 1.67	B 1.72	C 1.73	D 1.77
share of monosyllables (in per cent)	H 66.3	E 63.4	F 62.1	G 55.7	A 54.3	C 54.0	B 51.8	D 49.6
share of mono- and di-syllables (in per cent)	H 88.7	E 87.8	F 83.8	G 82.1	D 81.9	B 81.5	A 80.6	C 79.0

The vocabulary of a text can be further characterized according to how frequent the individual words are in the language in question. It would be possible to use frequency figures either from Kučera and Francis or from Thorndike and Lorge and compute the average for every text studies. As this is a procedure difficult to master without an electronic computer, a partial substitution is offered in Table 13. The figures there stand for the percentages of the most frequent words according to Thorndike and Lorge, the AA's in their classification.

Table 13. *Frequency of unrepeated words*

F	H	D	A	G	E	C	B
68.9	68.4	67.3	66.2	65.7	65.0	61.9	60.7

Although A to H are not suitable texts in every respect, being rather too short or containing too much direct speech, they seem to be suitable enough for the main purpose of the above analysis, i.e. for the establishment of a set of criteria in a stylo-statistical analysis of a text. The results of what we regard as a kind of pilot study, summarized in Tables 1 to 13, show that the stylistic features of the eight newspaper reports are distributed over a certain scale. As an example of the use of the scales in further research, the length of paragraphs and the length of words were chosen for comparison with other types of texts. The length of paragraphs in A to H ranged from 19.7 to 43.6 words. The average value for a sample of children's books was found to be 89.6 words per paragraph and the corresponding figure for a sample of descriptive texts from novels was 96.3 words, i.e. about twice as much as the longest paragraph in the newspaper reports. For word length, the figures for children's books (CB) and novels (N) are within the A to H scale and their values are indicated in diagrams 1 and 2 based on Tables 10 and 12. If we extend the scope of comparison to specialized texts, the values are beyond the A to H scale: in a few pages of linguistic texts, the average length of a word is 1.97 syllable (against 1.77 in A to H), the percentage of monosyllables is 42.3 (49.6 for A to H), and that of monosyllables and disyllables taken together is 74.6 (79.0 for A to H).

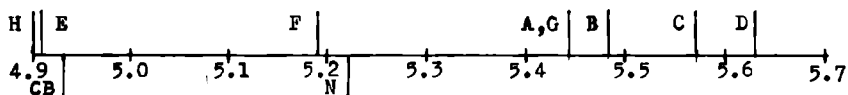


Diagram 1 Length of unrepeated words as written (Table 10)

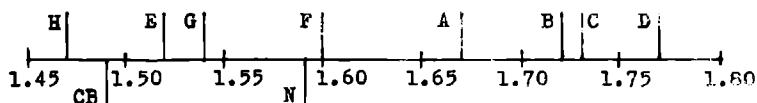


Diagram 2 Length of unrepeated words as spoken (Table 12)

## SUMMARY

Eight British newspaper reports covering the same event, a coroner's inquest into the death of a girl parachutist, were statistically analysed from a number of aspects. The length of paragraphs, sentences and clauses, the types of clauses, the use of non-finite verbal forms, the terminology, and the length of words were compared and, where possible, summarized in tables. The analysis was intended to achieve two aims: (i) to indicate a detailed statistical procedure which could characterize a certain text and be used in the comparison of texts from various stylistic strata, (ii) to show the wide gamut of statistical values found in the eight reports.

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## SOUDNÍ LÍČENÍ V OSMI NOVINOVÝCH VERZÍCH

Statistické analýze bylo podrobena osm zpráv z různých britských deníků popisujících tutéž událost (soudní líčení zjišťující příčinu smrti mladé parašutistky). Byla zjišťována délka odstavců, souvětí a vět, typy vět, užití neurčitých tvarů slovesných, terminologie, délka slov. Cílem analýzy bylo naznačit podrobný statistický postup, který by mohl charakterizovat určitý text a sloužit při srovnávání textů různých stylistických rovin, a dále ukázat šíři statistických hodnot rozebíraných osmi zpráv.

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- <sup>1</sup> The reprinting preserves the original texts as exactly as possible, including the different spellings of proper names (*Marion - Marian, Meecock - Meacock - Meecroft, Deryck - Deryk, Lyall - Lyle*), punctuation, and even two misprints (*slave* in A 30 and *attacking* in E 12). However, occasional irregularities in the use of inverted commas in some texts have been removed.
  - <sup>2</sup> The use of letters instead of the real names of the dailies is intended to prevent immediate connection between a textual feature and a particular paper. The names of the dailies are given in Note 7, p. XX.
  - <sup>3</sup> The passages left out do not make the texts unreadable. The information these passages give in the full versions is either known from other texts as printed here or is not essential. The

original version of D contains a longer quotation from an official report, which is not considered part of D, is not reprinted here and has not been included in the statistics.

- 4 This calculation had to be done on the texts as printed in the newspapers because it was not possible to wait with the statistics till the texts were printed here in this volume.
- 5 The calculation of contextual dependence operates with words 'predisposed by their semantic content to function in the theme. This group is formed especially by the personal, possessive, demonstrative and reflexive pronouns and the definite article' (Firbas 1966.241). The percentage in Table 2 is based on the occurrence of pronouns and co-ordinating conjunctions only. If a more thorough analysis were made, including repeated proper names and words like 'jury' and 'coroner', the results would be more detailed but the overabundance of the heavily context-dependent pronouns in some texts would be lost in the figures.
- 6 The figure for the average sentence length in all the eight texts is one of the exceptions among the data given here because the aim of the present analysis is not to establish statistical features of British newspaper reports as a whole but to indicate the limits within which the stylistic features of the individual reports can be placed.
- 7 For the figures on the language of children's books the following texts were used: Roald Dahl, *The Enormous Crocodile* (London, 1978), Michael Bond, *Paddington at Large* (London, 1966), Graham Greene, *The Little Train* (London, 1977), Graham Greene, *The Little Steamroller* (London, 1953), Nance Donkin, *Patchwork Mystery* (London, 1978), Margaret Mahy, *Leaf Magic* (London, 1976). The mini-corpus extracted from novels is based on Muriel Spark, *Territorial Right* (New York, 1979), John Creasey, *This Man Did I Kill?* (London, 1974), C. P. Snow, *Death under Sail* (London, 1932), N. Lewis, *Every Man's Brother* (London, 1967). The dissertation of Hana Ševečková operates with a corpus of 2,000 words and 500 sentences. The letters refer to the following newspapers: A – *Daily Mail*, B – *The Daily Telegraph*, C – *The Guardian*, D – *Yorkshire Post*, E – *The Sun*, F – *Daily Express*, G – *The Times*, H – *Daily Mirror*.



