

## **The Readability of Political Party Manifestos of the 2016 General Elections in Ghana**

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The objective of the study was to determine the readability of the manifestos that three political parties, namely National Democratic Congress (NDC), New Patriotic Party (NPP) and Convention People's Party (CPP), in Ghana used in the 2016 general elections. These parties were chosen because they were the only ones in Ghana with parliamentary representation at the time of the study. The readability indexes used were the Coleman-Liau Index and the Gunning Fog Index. 12 random sections of each manifesto were selected for analysis. Then, texts of no less than 300 words were sampled from each section. The readability formulas used were available on the internet. The statistics show that all three manifestos were written at difficulty levels that were quite above the reading abilities of the average Ghanaian voter. Further, it was found that the manifestos did not differ significantly from each other, statistically speaking.

*Keywords:* readability, readability formulas, manifestos, political parties, linguistic complexity

### **Introduction**

The reintroduction of democratic governance and a multi-party electoral system in Ghana began in 1992. Since then, the Ghanaian political scene has seen a multitude of parties established. Many have stagnated in growth, grown practically dormant, or otherwise merged with more dominant political parties. Some historians argue that the importance of Ghana's political parties is due to the stability of their traditions through the West African nation's tumultuous political history (Morrison, 2004). The parties have proven to be widely accepted conduits for expressing and bringing together the variety of aspirations of the citizenry in a competitive electoral system (Morrison, 2004).

The present political setting in Ghana is dominated by two traditions, represented by two large parties with wide acceptance and broad bases (Pinkey, 1997). These are the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and Convention People's Party (CPP). The National Democratic Congress is characterised by populism and a commitment to a market economy. As a carry-over from its traditional roots, the NDC appears to be positioned to appeal to rural folks and is less elitist. The New Patriotic Party is characterised by liberal governance and a market economy. The NPP is also largely dominated by an intellectual, business, and professional elite class. It traditionally caters to the educated and urbanites (Morrison, 2004). Currently, there are only three political parties in Ghana with representation in Parliament: the NPP, the NDC, and another

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long-pedigreed party, the Convention People's Party (CPP). The CPP, like the NDC, has a largely populist leaning.

From 1992 till now, publishing a manifesto in each election is a customary activity that parties are widely expected to undertake. The presentation of manifestos to the electorate is usually an emblematic act that heralds the campaign's most competitive chapter. As such, it guarantees some media attention for the party and its ideas. To build lasting ties with the electorate, political elites have incentive to explain to voters their policy objectives, what they have been doing, and what they have achieved (Lin and Osnabrugge, 2018). Manifestos are popular conduits for transmitting such information to voters. It is likely that the absence of a manifesto presentation might lead to snide remarks in the press and a missed opportunity to motivate the party rank-and-file for the campaign.

It is conceivable that the aforementioned characteristics of Ghana's political parties would have some influence on their individual writing styles in their manifestos (Decadri and Boussalis, 2019). More specifically, I expect that the traditionally elitist parties would design written communication to suit the abilities of the educated elite among the Ghanaian voting public. On the other hand, I envisage that the populist political movements would adapt their written political communication to the abilities of those with limited reading proficiency. If these assumptions hold true, then they should affect the types of audiences that these documents would appeal to. Also, such an approach to political communication would seem to establish or further solidify an elitist-versus-populist hegemony in the Ghanaian political landscape. The purpose of this study was to assess the readability levels of the manifestos that three political parties with representation in Ghana's parliament used in the 2016 general elections. The first specific aim is to determine the readability levels of the NDC, the NPP, and the CPP manifestos. Second, the study seeks to determine the significant differences in readability among the three manifestos.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the readability levels of the NDC, the NPP, and the CPP manifestos?
2. What statistically significant differences in readability are there among the three manifestos?

### **Literature Review**

#### **The Place of Manifestos in Democracies**

The idea of democracy as a universal commitment is an essential distinguishing feature of twentieth-century thought. Across the globe, it appears

that democracy has generally attained normative status as the right way to govern and to be governed. Sen (1999) argued that democracy was not simply defined by majority rule. Sen (1999) asserted that the demands of democracy transcended voting and high regard for electoral outcomes to the protection of freedoms and a guarantee of free discussion, and unrestricted distribution of news and fair comment. The implication of Sen's assertion is that an electoral process would be fundamentally flawed if it did not allow for different corporate and individual actors presenting their arguments, or for the voting public enjoying unfettered access to information and free consideration of competing ideologies and policy statements. The idealistic concept of democracy is based on the idea that it is from the people that all powers of the government are derived; all persons can and should engage in the democratic process (Creppell, 1989). In the foregoing definition of democracy, there is no room for social, economic, and educational barriers to democratic engagement. However, if democracy goes beyond just the ballot box, then this ideal notion of democracy does not always pertain even in the most advanced democracies. This is because, according to Creppell (1989), many people hold the ability to read and write, or to be functionally literate, to be a clear and crucial requirement for a genuinely empowered democratic public<sup>1</sup>. I tend to agree with such sentiment. This is because, while there are yet many modes for communicating political content, written text continues to be a consistent and widespread medium for the dissemination of political thought. Therefore, it is important to empower the voting public by affording them basic education, at least. However, until such a time as the entire population of a state may achieve what might be described as optimal rate of literacy, there will be the need to adapt written political communication to the generally low levels of literacy among the general population.

Political competition in democracies is usually organised around political party systems. Political parties are the interface between society and politics; parties are the means by which citizens are connected to the state. Parties are therefore central actors on the political stage of any democratic state (Walgrave and Nuytemans, 2009). Political parties serve as the couriers of information between society and political decision makers, linking citizen's aspirations and preferences to public policy (Walgrave and Nuytemans 2009). It would seem obvious then, that if political parties failed in their role as carriers of information the linkage between society and the state could be jeopardized. There are a variety of ways in which political parties may communicate their assessment of the environment within which they exist and what they prescribe to be the best way to improve that environment. Among these ways, electoral manifestos appear to have become the most popular (Dolezal et al., 2012). It appears that party after party without fail produce these documents every election cycle. This is largely due to the fact that party democracy emphasises parties' proposed policy programmes as the bases for their canvassing for support, their rhetorical battles, voters' choices, party alliance building, and government policy (Eder et al., 2017). At the start of an electioneering process, a party composes an outline of policy positions, preferences, and developmental objectives. This proposition is offered to the voting public. If the

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<sup>1</sup>For a fuller discussion of the history of literacy and suffrage, see Creppell (1989).

offer gains sufficient support, the party may be given the opportunity to take over government, whereupon it will start to execute the promises in the manifesto. In a subsequent election, the promises and objectives in the manifesto become the basis upon which the electorate will evaluate the party's performance (Walgrave and Nuytemans, 2009). Therefore, parties charge into elections under the banners of their manifestos. Through manifestos political parties communicate their policy positions and priorities (Eder et al., 2017; Walgrave and Nuytemans, 2009).

### **Why Parties Publish Manifestos**

There is evidence that only few voters actually read party manifestos (Eder et al., 2017). Still, manifestos continue to enjoy popularity as the definitive declarations of what parties stand for. They are the primary instigators of comment in the mass media; they provide the basis for interrogating party candidates; and, they drive conversations regarding the election. According to Eder et al. (2017), there are, at least, three reasons why parties are committed to writing and publishing manifestos.

#### *Compendium of Valid Party Positions*

A manifesto provides a thorough summary of a party's political stance on a broad range of issues. Such a summary is useful to sophisticated voters who may, on the basis of such a document, deduce for themselves which political parties offer policies that come closest to their aspirations. It is also a useful document for the mass media, who can use the document as basis for their reporting. On the party front, manifestos provide grassroots activists and organisers with a reference frame for disseminating and discussing party policy propositions among the electorate.

#### *Streamlining a Political Campaign*

Political parties are not restricted to the use of manifestos to express their policy positions. In some lands, parties may also publish documents that define their fundamental values and identities. They may also publish documents that declare their respective parties' positions on specific issues. The former type of document may be described as party programmes; the latter types can be described as action programmes (Dolezal et al., 2012). These types of documents differ from manifestos in how specific they are on issues, in how comprehensive they are, and in their longevity. Manifestos are generally shorter-lived and more comprehensive compared to party programmes. However, action programmes are generally more specific and focused than are manifestos (Dolezal et al., 2012). All these other documents are important. Yet, the manifesto hold supremacy over all these other publications, at least, in the context of an election. This is because the manifesto, according to (Klingemann et al., 2006, p. 16), is "unique in being the only authoritative party policy statement approved by an official convention or congress". The manifesto is essentially the party's contract with voters (Ray,

2007). Equally importantly, the manifesto is the one organizing document that allows divergent interests and opinions within a party to present a united front to the voting public. The manifesto therefore provides the constraints to which all the different actors in the party must conform in order to present a coherent and reliable front (De Winter and Baudewyns, 2015; Eder et al., 2015; Selb and Lutz, 2015).

### *Campaign Material*

During elections, a party gives away all manner of textual materials and other memorabilia that are designed to establish the presence and promises of the party in the minds of voters. Printed Copies of the manifesto, or a condensed version of it, often known as the “manifesto highlights” would make a handy give-away that allows the propagation of the party’s campaign message.

### **Linguistic Complexity of Political Communication**

There are published works in European politics that seem to link language complexity to political party ideology. Specifically, it appears that there is a link between populist ideologies and simple language. Decadri and Boussalis (2019) briefly mentioned works that have reported on populist political parties and candidates who have been noted for simple communication styles in recent years (see Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2007; Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2013). Taking a cue from Decadri and Boussalis (2019), I reviewed a handful recent works on the complexity of political communication. An example is Bischof and Senninger’s (2018) research in which they studied the language of party manifestos in Austria and Germany for the period 1945-2013. In this study, the authors found support for the notion that populist parties tended to present their political messages in less complex language. Interestingly, the study also found that respondents were better able to party’s ideologies when the information was presented in simpler language. Also conducted recently, the work by Kayam (2018) showed that Donald Trump’s speeches were designed to be comprehensible to nine- to eleven-year-old, or fourth to fifth-graders. Kayam (2018) multiple indexes in the study: Flesch–Kincaid, Simple Measure of Gobbledygook (SMOG), and Gunning-Fog. Kayam posited that Donald Trump may be using simple language a rhetorical strategy to gain popularity. Understandably, readability of political texts has interested researchers for some time and continues to do so.

In June 1977, Doris E. S. Zingman concluded a thesis at the State University of New Jersey in which she studied the readability of mass political literature. The stated objective of the study was to determine the reading level required to understand those texts. Specifically, she used the Flesch Reading Ease Index and the Fry Graph to test samples of text from three newspapers and three magazines during election season. She found that the election materials in the two sources were too difficult to be useful for informing the public. We find it peculiar that these tests were not conducted on literature published by political parties.

In a study published in 2011, Reilly and Richey (2011) hypothesized that lower readability of ballot questions would result in higher roll-off as voters would decline to answer questions they did not understand. The authors subjected 1,211 state-level ballot questions from 1997 to 2007 to the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level readability test. Employing hierarchical linear regression models of state-level data, the authors found that increased complexity led to more roll-off, even after controlling for confounding variables. Reilly and Richey (2011) concluded that readability had a definite influence on direct democracy. The implication is that complex language in political communication could hinder the ordinary citizen's participation in the democratic process.

The internet can be a useful medium for disseminating political information. Among the variety of online formats available are blogs. Bigi (2013) studied the readability of articles on a blog that had been converted from a personal one discussing political content to a political blog written by a politician. The articles were from January 2005 to May 2012. Using the Microsoft spelling and grammar function, the Gunning Fog Index, and Gulpease Index, Bigi (2013) concluded that readability of communications tended to deteriorate when the blog became political and more institutional. This finding is interesting and suggests that genre of a sampled text would have some influence on its readability.

There is also an insightful study of the complexity of US presidential rhetoric and its relationship with the tendency for unilateral proclamations and actions (Olds, 2015). This study was set against the background of works which claimed that remarks by the presidency could influence public opinion (Wood, 2007), were calculated to resonate with the public (Tulis, 1987), and that the stylistic choice in such proclamations could be deliberately designed to be "anti-intellectual" (Lim, 2008). The author used the Flesch Readability formula to examine the weekly public addresses by the president for the period between February 1993 and May 2015. The monthly averages of readability scores were computed. Using a regression model, this time series study found that the simplicity of presidential rhetoric could be predictive of unilateral action on the part of the president. We hold this study to be important because it points to a predictive relationship between the difficulty level of political rhetoric and tendencies, or actual behaviour of political actors.

Decadri and Boussalis (2019), based on a review of published anecdotal claims, hypothesized that populist ideology was negatively related to the complexity of a Member of Parliament's oral presentations. They further hypothesized that when a politician switched from a populist to a mainstream political group, the politician's language would see an increase in complexity. Decadri and Boussalis (2019) used the Gulpease Index in their study because of its suitability to the Italian language. The authors concluded that the complexity of political language was affected by populist ideology, electoral strategy and party membership. They further concluded that populist communication could be inherently simple linguistically, and offered that such a characteristic could possibly be exploited by populist political bodies to outperform their mainstream opponents.

An interesting recent study shows that politicians may simplify their language when they perceived that their constituents had lower linguistic abilities. Lin and Osnabrugge (2018) used the Flesch Reading formula to assess the readability levels of Germany's Member of Parliament speeches. The authors collected data on characteristics (such as immigrant status) of constituents. Lin and Osnabrugge (2018) expected that German MPs would be sensitive to the socio-economic contexts of the people they represented. The texts sampled, covering the period from 2002 to 2009 consisted of 79,000 floor speeches made by a total number of 750 MPs. The study revealed that MPs tended to make their speeches simpler when their constituents were relatively poor, less educated, and were from an immigrant background. These findings are relevant to studies of political representation and communication strategies (Lin and Osnabrugge, 2018).

A synthesis of the foregoing works indicates that political literature, when difficult to read, could affect full voter participation in the democratic process. The literature also shows that political ideology could be positively related to the complexity of language politicians use in their communications; populist ideologies tended to be related to simpler language. Moreover, linguistic complexity could be predictive of political intent and actual behaviour. Nevertheless, political actors could, if they so desired, tune the complexity of their language to the language abilities of their constituents. On the basis of these studies, I can expect the more populist NDC and CPP to have more readable manifestos (that is, less language complexity) than the generally elitist NPP. However, based on the findings of Lin and Osnabrugge (2018), it could be that the NPP wrote their manifesto to be sensitive to the general literacy levels of Ghanaians.

It is interesting to note, though, that researchers could hardly find a good number of works that had studied the readability of manifestos in particular. Perhaps this is a testament to the claims that apart from research into how party claims in manifestos translate into programmes and policies post-election, there has been little work on all other aspects of manifestos (Dolezal et al., 2012; Eder et al., 2017; Switek, 2016).

### **Theoretical Perspective**

Borrowing from Decadri and Boussalis (2019), I support this work on the populist ideological framework. Our definition of populist is based on Mudde's (2004) characterization of the phenomenon. After a critique of two widely used interpretations of populism, both derogatory and eliciting rather strong response, Mudde offers a characterization that the author believes is better suited to empirical and academic consideration. Traditionally, widely used interpretations are centered on the two divides: the elite and the common people. Offering a more academic characterization of the phenomenon, Mudde (2004) theorises that populism is a "thin-centered" ideology. According to Mudde's definition,

"populism [is] an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the... (general will) of the people." (543)

We posit, in line with Bischof and Senninger (2018), that populists have ideological and electoral reasons to use simpler language in their communication. If populist parties desire to fully commit to an identity as parties for the people, these parties would need to adapt to the “simplicity” of their target electorate (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2007). According to Drămnescu (2014), populists use straightforward rhetoric as a political ploy to present themselves and their political propositions as belonging to the people. From this perspective, I expected that the manifesto of the generally populist NDC and NPP would be more readable (that is, less linguistically complex) than that of the elitist NPP.

### **Study Methodology**

This was a non-experimental, descriptive research. Non-experimental surveys do not control for or manipulate variables, but test these variables using statistical methods (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Descriptive research provides a picture of a phenomenon as it naturally occurs (Tavakoli, 2012). The study was descriptive in that it sought to provide a picture of the readability and of the manifestos as is. The readability scores manifestos were compared. However, making such comparison is still within the definition of descriptive research (Tavakoli, 2012). A descriptive, non-experimental study design was appropriate because the objective was purely to observe and record data on readability of the manifestos, to describe readability of the texts according to the recorded data, and to compare the difficulty levels of the documents. It was not the objective of the researchers to manipulate the manifestos or otherwise apply some treatment to them and to test the effect of such treatment. The data collected was of a quantitative nature, that is, the readability scores as they were generated by an online calculator. Therefore, this study is quantitative.

### **Sampling Technique**

Simple random sampling was used to select 12 sections from each manifesto for testing. Simple random sampling is a technique in which all possible subsets of the population have equal chance of being sampled. Simple random sampling produces samples whose statistics are unbiased estimates of the population parameters (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Each section of a manifesto was assigned a code. For each manifesto, these codes were entered into MS Excel in order in which the units occur in the document. Each code was assigned a random number using the RAND function. The random numbers were then sorted from smallest to largest thereby effectively randomizing the codes. The first 12 sections were selected for readability analysis.

### **Readability Indexes**

The Gunning Fog Index and Coleman-Liau Indexes were used in the study. The calculators were found online at <https://www.utility-online.org>.



### **Text Selection and Cleaning**

From each selected section, text samples of size  $x > 300$  words were sampled. The 300-word constraint was because of the requirements for analysis using the Coleman-Liau Index. The sampled texts were individually pasted into MS Word and cleaned by means of the following steps

1. Bullets and numbers were removed; lists were collapsed into prose.
2. Misspellings resulting from optical character recognition failures were corrected.
3. Headings were removed.
4. Stems preceding lists were removed or made to become part of first list items. This step resulted in some sentences assuming imperative forms. However, such changes were not deemed to significantly affect overall sentence characteristics of the text.

These cleaning procedures were performed based on the fact that bulleted lists, tables, equations and headings were not among the materials used to develop the formulas (Schriver, 2015).

### **Data Analysis**

The readability scores were recorded and organised in Microsoft Excel. However, all data analysis was done in IBM SPSS® Statistics. Simple descriptive statistics were run in order to organise and summarise the characteristics of the sampled texts (Tavakoli, 2012). The information generated included Mean and Standard Deviation. This information is presented in tables in a subsequent section.

In order to make a choice between the two broad inferential statistics categories, I run the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality. Parametric tests of significance require that the distribution of the sample be normal or near normal. This requirement is especially important where, as in this work, the researcher has to work with small sample sizes (Tavakoli, 2012). The Shapiro-Wilk test was chosen because it is suitable for sample sizes less than 2000. Another requirement of parametric tests is the symmetry of the distributions, or the homogeneity of variance, among the various groups under study. I run Levene's test of homogeneity of variance.

Thirdly, I run a number of Analysis of Variance procedures, both parametric and non-parametric, to test the statistical significance of differences, if any, among the readability scores of the textbooks. The use of both categories of inferential statistics was for confirmation purposes. Some authors (e.g., Cramer and Howitt, 2004) recommend that both parametric and non-parametric analyses be done to ensure that findings and conclusions are not affected by outliers.

## Results and Discussion

The study was designed to assess the readability levels of the 2016 manifestos of the three political parties with parliamentary representation. The readability analysis was done with the Coleman-Liau and Gunning Fog Indexes. Inferential statistics were used to assess the differences, if any, between the three political documents.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for CPP, NDC, and NPP Manifestos

		N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
CPP	Word Count	12	311	413	351.33	28.42	0.674	0.637	0.754	1.232
	Sentence Count	12	11	18	13.50	2.153	0.656	0.637	0.195	1.232
	Coleman-Liau	12	12.60	17.43	14.54	1.33	0.711	0.637	0.569	1.232
	Gunning Fog	12	16.23	23.35	18.82	2.23	0.738	0.637	-0.216	1.232
NDC	Word Count	12	327	419	358.92	28.10	1.019	0.637	0.257	1.232
	Sentence Count	12	13	21	16.92	2.58	-0.158	0.637	-1.359	1.232
	Coleman-Liau	12	11.54	17.79	14.38	1.72	0.537	0.637	0.410	1.232
	Gunning Fog	12	13.74	20.39	16.65	2.19	0.411	0.637	-0.818	1.232
NPP	Word Count	12	303	394	359.50	32.56	-0.490	0.637	-1.344	1.232
	Sentence Count	12	9	20	14.25	3.52	0.217	0.637	-0.916	1.232
	Coleman-Liau	12	10.66	16.74	14.06	1.58	-0.537	0.637	1.017	1.232
	Gunning Fog	12	14.96	22.94	18.47	3.02	0.263	0.637	-1.621	1.232

From Table 1, it would take a person in grade 15 in the US educational system to understand the CPP manifesto, according to the Coleman-Liau Readability Index. This means that it would require a person in junior year or level 300 of university in Ghana to be able to read and understand the CPP manifesto.

Judging by this fact, the CPP manifesto is too difficult to read (Mean= 14.5, SD= 1.3) for the greater proportion of the Ghanaian voter population. It would take someone with 19 years of formal education to be able to understand the CPP manifesto on the first read. A fog index of 12 requires the reading level of a US high school senior, that is, someone who is about 18 years old. A Gunning Fog Index score of 17 requires a university graduate to read and understand the text under consideration. A score of 19 is very difficult for the average adult even in Ghana. The CPP manifesto is too difficult to read (Mean=18.8, SD= 2.2). For an arguably populist party by tradition, it appears that the Convention People's Party may not have written their 2016 manifesto to be readable by the most people in Ghana. From the perspective that populists have ideological and electoral reasons to use simpler language in their communication (Bischof and Senninger, 2018), this finding about the readability of the CPP's manifesto is contrary to our expectations. Moreover, the finding counters the suggestion by Kayam (2018) that the use of simple language might be a populist party's communication strategy to garner political support. It appears that such is true as well for the other perceived populist political party whose manifesto is included in this study.

From Table 1, NDC section of scores, it would take a person in Grade 14 of the US education system to read and understand the NDC Manifesto. The NDC manifesto is too difficult for the average US adult to read according to the Coleman-Liau Index (Mean= 14.4, SD= 1.7). Grade 14 is the approximate equivalent of level 200 or sophomore year in a Ghanaian university. It would take approximately 17 years of formal education for a person to be able to understand the NDC manifesto on the first read. A score of 17 means that the text is suitable for someone with a university degree. The NDC manifesto is too difficult to read according to the Gunning Fog Index (Mean= 16.6, SD= 2.2). For a party that is largely touted as populist (Morrison, 2004), it would be expected that the NDC would create a more readable manifesto. From the populist ideological perspective, it was counter-intuitive that the NDC's foremost political campaign text in the 2016 general elections was written at a difficulty level that was suited to sophisticated readers (Drămnescu, 2014). A difficult text could not fittingly be presented as belonging to the people. It is also interesting that the NDC as a party that presents itself as belonging to the people did not endeavour to bring their language down to the level of the ordinary, non-intellectual voter. It would appear that unlike the German MPs in Lin and Osnabrugge's (2018) study, the NDC party frontliners may not be sensitive to the reading abilities of the ordinary voter public.

From table 1, according to the Coleman-Liau Index, the NPP manifesto can be read and understood by a person with 14<sup>th</sup> Grade level of formal education in the US. With a Mean score of 14.1 (SD=1.6), the text is too difficult for the average US adult. Grade 14 is equivalent to sophomore year or level 200 in university in Ghana. The text was therefore too difficult for the ordinary voting Ghanaian. It would take 18 years of formal education in the US for a person to be able to understand the NPP manifesto on the first reading, according to the Gunning Fog Index. With a mean score of 18.4 (SD= 3.0), the NPP manifesto is fit for only university graduates. It is too difficult for the average American adult to read. In Ghana, 18 years of formal mainstream education would be equivalent to the second year in a Master's programme. It means that, according to the Gunning Fog Index, the NPP manifesto was extremely difficult for the ordinary voting Ghanaian. However, this is hardly unexpected of a party that is traditionally elitist (Morrison, 2004). However, since there is some advantage to be gained by using simple language in political communication, the NPP party could benefit from making the language of their manifesto less institutional (Bigi, 2013).

### **Comparative Study of Three Manifestos**

This section of the study presents statistical comparison of the readability scores of the three manifestos. The objective is to establish statistically significant differences, if any, among the scores. From the populist ideological viewpoint, the CPP and NDC should have manifestos written at a readability level that is statistically different from the readability score of the NPP manifesto, which is likely crafted with highly educated voters in mind.

In order to decide on the type of inferential statistical tests to run to determine differences, there was the need to evaluate normality of distribution, and

homogeneity of variances. The results for these tests are presented in Tables 2 and 3 respectively.

Table 2. Tests for Normality

	Group	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
<b>COLEman</b>	CPP	0.958	12	0.754
	NDC	0.958	12	0.749
	NPP	0.965	12	0.853
<b>GUN_FOG</b>	CPP	0.936	12	0.442
	NDC	0.942	12	0.525
	NPP	0.873	12	0.072

At 0.05 confidence interval, all sample scores, on both indices, had normal distributions according to the Shapiro-Wilk test for normality (Table 2). This indicates, for each of the indices, that the classic parametric ANOVA procedure would be appropriate to compare the means of the three manifestos.

Table 3. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
<b>COLEman</b>	0.125	2	33	0.883
<b>GUN_FOG</b>	1.433	2	33	0.253

Variances are homogenous. A parametric analysis of variance is indicated (Table 3). Table 4 presents the analyses of variances between the mean readability scores from the three manifestos across the two indexes used.

Table 4. Analyses of Variance

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Coleman-Liau</b>	Between Groups	1.484	2	0.742	0.307	0.737
	Within Groups	79.692	33	2.415		
	Total	81.176	35			
<b>Gunning Fog</b>	Between Groups	32.595	2	16.297	2.585	.091
	Within Groups	208.073	33	6.305		
	Total	240.667	35			

There were no statistically significant differences among mean scores from the Coleman-Liau Index for 3 manifestos ( $p=0.737$ ,  $\alpha=0.05$ ). This implies that, statistically speaking, the 3 manifestos had just about the same readability.

There were no statistically significant differences among mean scores from the Gunning Fog Index for the three manifestos ( $p=0.091$ ,  $\alpha=0.05$ ). Statistically speaking, the implication is that the three manifestos did not differ in how difficult they were to read.

More robust tests of the equality of means, as well as a non-parametric test of the equality of means, confirmed the results already presented.

The implication of these findings is that, statistically speaking, the manifestos of the two populist parties, the Convention People's Party and the National Democratic Congress, were as difficult to read as the manifesto of the more elitist New Patriotic Party.

### Conclusion

The objective of the study was to determine the readability of the manifestos that three political parties in Ghana which were used in the 2016 general elections. These parties were chosen because they were the only ones in Ghana with parliamentary representation at the time of the study. The readability indexes used were the Coleman-Liau Index and the Gunning Fog Index. 12 random sections of each manifesto were selected for analysis. Then, texts of no less than 300 words were sampled from each section. The readability formulas used were available on the internet. The statistics show that all three manifestos were written at difficulty levels that were quite above the reading abilities of the Ghanaian voter. Further, it was found that the manifestos did not differ significantly from each other, statistically speaking.

The current study is recommending that the writers of manifestos should consider revising the writing style to make the manifestos meet the standard reading scores recommended for public documents so that electorates of varied educational backgrounds could find the manifestos readable. Every form of communication to ensure electorates have access to adequate information about parties' policies and programmes that warrant their campaign for political power should be made clear and simple to the electorates. In writing, the plain language policy recommends the documents be composed as readable as possible. Hence, this study recommends that there is a great need for the parties to write readable manifestos to appeal to the wider electorates of Ghana.

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