



NEWSPAPER STYLE: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HEADLINES IN NEWSPAPERS

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ABSTRACT

To get access to unbiased, accurate, objective information is a vital necessity in present-day society. From this perspective, the role of mass media can hardly be overestimated. It is common knowledge that there are different types of mass media: print media (newspapers, magazines), their electronic version (in the Internet) as well as radio and television. The newspaper as a form of the mass media is known for several ages. However, the investigation of the language in newspapers has started only in the mid-20th century. The principles of creating and analyzing newspaper headlines have not been widely explored. Some features of newspaper style are considered in this article.

KEYWORDS: - Newspaper style, features,

INTRODUCTION

The word newspaper suggests that its main function is to give news. Despite this, it is used to educate, enlighten or entertain people. The newspaper also seeks to influence public opinion on political, economic and other matters. Newspapers can provide a medium of information to those who do not have television, radio or the internet. According to J. Tunstall as cited by D. Reah, there are three types of newspapers:

1. The broadsheet newspapers (e.g., the Telegraph, the Independent, the Times and the Guardian);
 2. The middle-range tabloids (e.g., the Express and the Daily Mail);
 3. Tabloids (e.g., the Sun, the Mirror, the Star).
- The tabloids and broadsheet newspapers have

different functions to perform. As The New British Politics states, tabloids are less serious (popular) daily or Sunday papers so called because of their smaller size. It is added that the broadsheets now publish in a tabloid format, but are still known as broadsheets, or quality papers. It should be mentioned that tabloids tend to focus on personalities and gossip, stories found in these newspapers are smaller comparing to broadsheets, the writing style is less formal and slangy, more pictures are found. While the broadsheets are described as serious (quality) national daily or Sunday papers so called because of their size. It is generally believed that broadsheets contain more serious news than tabloids and are read by more educated people. Information in the middle-range tabloids focuses on the sensational stories as well as on the important news events. There are two types of news that can be found in broadsheets or



tabloids: hard news and soft news. C. Rich points out that —hard news— include stories of a timely nature about events or conflicts that have just happened or are about to happen such as fires, crimes, meetings, protest rallies, speeches and testimony in court cases. Hard news has little value after 24-48 hours. The news of such themes found in broadsheet newspapers tend to focus on the main and the most important details related to the story. Another type of news is called soft news and Rich states that —soft news— entertains or informs, with an emphasis on human interests and novelty and less immediacy than hard news. Unlike the hard news, soft news pay attention to the things related to the minor things of the story e.g. personal life, work, etc.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order not to confuse publicistic style with newspaper style the main difference has to be mentioned. The goal of publicistic style is to influence public opinion, to make the audience accept the speaker's point of view. On the contrary, the goal of newspaper style is to inform the audience. Publicistic essays and feature articles do not belong to newspaper style. Newspaper style tries to attract the reader's attention thereby special means are used. Denisova and Pozniak distinguish specific headlines, space ordering, specific vocabulary features and characterize newspaper style by an extensive use of:

1. Special political and economic terms (apartheid, by-election);
2. Non-term political vocabulary (public, people);
3. Newspaper cliches (vital issue, well-informed sources);
4. Cliches (captains of industry, pillars of society);
5. Abbreviations (PM, NATO);
6. Neologisms (glasnost, Gorbymania).

A headline for newspapers is often the most important element on a page as it gives the reader an overall picture of the news. The main goal of a headline is to grab the reader's attention so various stylistic devices are used. A headline should be gripping in order to attract people to read an article. Most newspapers now use headlines that say what has to be said in a minimum of words.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary¹ defines a headline as a title of a newspaper article printed in large letters, especially at the top of the front page. In some cases, it defines a unique type of text as it has a range of functions that specifically dictate its shape, content and structure.

Headlines are usually written in a sensational way in order to arouse the reader's curiosity. As headline writers try to catch the reader's eye by using as few words as possible. It seems that newspaper headlines provide a summary of an article. However, this function of a headline seems to be narrow and some linguists suggest a more precise division. A headline can not only summarize, but sometimes highlight or quote. It can be considered that this writing style of headlines that includes as minimum word as possible and has the specific writing style is called headline.

J. Morley distinguishes² five main functions of newspaper headlines:

1. attract the reader's attention;
2. summarize the content of the article;
3. indicate the writer's attitude to the story ;
4. indicate the register of the article;
5. indicate the focus of the article.

¹ Online Reference

Dictionary [http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/headline_="](http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/headline_=)headline Accessed on 16 January, 2015

² Morley, J., Truth to Tell: Form and Function in Newspaper Headlines. CLUEB. 1998. 56p



As it can be seen from these functions of newspaper headlines, they are concentrated not only on the summary of the contents of the article, but more on the reader and the attraction of his/her attention. Correct use of these functions gives the reader a chance to have a quick view of the news by giving informative headlines and thereby it helps to save the reader's time.

Moreover, headlines usually stimulate the interest for the reader of the subject matter of the text. However, readers can face a problem of understanding the headline as newspaper headlines make the use of abbreviations, do not follow grammatical rules or they are incomplete sentences. The headline writer has to keep two main aspects in mind. Firstly, he has to attract the attention of the reader and secondly he has to give a hint of what the article is going to be about. For the purpose of intriguing, headlines have their own special vocabulary.

It is clear that, vocabulary of headlines are fell into three parts: unusual, sensational and short. For better understanding it could be added that unusual and sensational words are used to draw the reader's attention. The advantage of short words is not only grabbing attention. They can be produced giant sized on the page. In other words short words save place and so they are more preferred in the headlines of newspapers. Additionally, headlines of newspapers generally include favour, vivid as well as emotional words, often related to violence or sex.

RESULTS

All of the functional styles as well as the newspaper style have their own typical elements. Typical features for newspaper style are followings:

1. Morphological features – frequent usage of non-finite verb forms; omission of articles, link verbs, auxiliaries, pronouns.
2. Syntactical features – use of impersonal sentences, elliptical constructions, interrogative sentences, infinitive complexes and attributive groups.
3. Lexical features – newspaper clichés and set phrases, terminological variety; abbreviations and acronyms; numerous proper names.
4. Compositional features – carefully selected vocabulary; variety of topics, wide use of quotations.

Each of these elements has their own function. For example, morphological features are used in order to save space which is limited in newspapers. Syntactical as well as lexical and compositional features call the attention to words or word phrases. All of these features are combined together in order to make the article as interesting as possible, to shock or surprise the reader by the unusual, vivid and colourful language.

DISCUSSION

Headlines of newspapers generally include favour, vivid, emotional words, often related to violence or sex. Below the list of short words are given, which are used in headlines and are unusual in the sense in ordinary language.

List of common headline vocabulary.



WORD	MEANING IN HEADLINE	EXAMPLE
Bar	Refuse	Hotel bars football fans
Deal	Agreement	India signs nuclear deal with us
Allege	Make an accusation	Blind girl alleges unfair treatment
Call for	Demand/ appeal for	Trade unions call for strike
Edge	Move gradually	World edges toward war
Go for	Be sold for	Picasso painting goes for \$5 million
Firm	Determined not to change	Pm firm on tax reforms
Push for	Ask for, encourage	Schools push for more cash

There are lists of words which are typically, or, indeed, almost exclusively used in newspaper headlines in a number of places. For example, Hospital rap; Killer bug, Death probe, Fire-bomb riddle, Poison peril, Corpse horror etc.

Headlines also have a special register. We can notice the difference in language when talking about economics and when talking about football. Moreover, there is also a difference in language when we write formally or informally, technically or non-technically, emotionally or neutrally. The technical register is associated with formal register and emotional language with the colloquial. As the headlines are one of the most important elements of the newspaper, special attention is paid in order to make them more colourful, intriguing and catching. To do so, different stylistic means are used.

Obviously, expressiveness in headlines is achieved with the help of various stylistic phonetic devices:

- Alliteration: Welsh Win World; US Cuts Find Few Friends.
- Rhyme: Back in the Outback; Dirty Dealing in Cleaning.
- Rhythm: Thatcher Can't Catch; Spycatcher-Wright.

All of these examples draw attention as they sound more poetic. The usage of phonetic devices makes

the headline pleasant to read. Above all, they have the effect of stirring the reader's emotions. It creates a musical variation which can be humorous or disturbing.

- Emotive syntax includes such elements like parallel constructions: What counts isn't how you look but how you behave.
- As well as antithesis: Setting foot on the moon may be a small step for a man but a giant step for mankind.

The headlines when using parallel constructions together with antithesis become like the vivid pictures and are very illustrative. Contrasting two different ideas or repeating of the same patterns of words or phrases in the headline forces the reader to pay attention as they have the aim to shock the reader.

Besides the phonetic and syntactic constructions, Hakobian and Krunkyan mention one more group of devices which are used in the creation of the headlines, i.e. lexical stylistic devices:

- Various epithets (word and phrase epithets, sentence epithets): I'm Dead Angry With My Ban; No More Nagasaki's' Call.
- Metaphors: "Hope Fades with Every Hour, Us "Peace" Plan Hides Iron Fist.
- Metonymy: Greenham Goes to Moscow;



(British women peace fighters from Greenham Common have returned from the recent world congress in Moscow with some positive images of Russia). Glass Goes at the Old Bailey. (Hundreds of glass carafes and tumblers used in the Old Bailey's courtroom and eating areas have been replaced by plastic containers following an attack on Judge Ann Goddard by an accused man, who threw a carafe at her – which narrowly missed and shattered against a wall).

- Simile: The “Knyzak Problem” For the Rich Smells like a Rose to Seniors
- Allusion: A Tale of Two Germanys from Russia Without Love.

The most typical usage of stylistic devices has been illustrated above. However, it does not cover the great variety in headline structures. Stylistic devices are used for the purpose to impress the reader. The headlines become more fun and attractive. The factor of surprise is being created and the reader is interested in reading of the whole article. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that stylistic means sometimes create the uncertainty of meaning as firstly the connotation of those devices has to be revealed.

Conclusion: Having analyzed the main features of newspaper headlines, it can be stated that a headline is the title given to an article and which has a special way of writing and its own functions. The newspaper headlines are written in sensational way and the information is usually put in a few words to keep them more economical. It can be concluded that the use of different lexical and grammatical features combined together creates the particular and distinctive style of the newspaper headlines. Moreover, it indicates not only the newspaper style, but also emphasizes the identity of the English language linguistic regularities. Further investigation could involve the comparative analysis of the linguistic features used in the English and Lithuanian newspaper headlines. Also, it would be interesting to see whether the way of creating

headlines is the same in other languages. Moreover, the investigation could involve the comparison of the classification which includes only grammatical or only lexical features in the English newspaper headlines, the analysis of the translation of the headlines used in tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. The linguistic features as typical of headlines in English newspapers are considered:

- 1) the omission of articles;
- 2) the omission of verbs and of auxiliaries (e.g., the verb “to be”);
- 3) nominalizations;
- 4) the frequent use of complex noun phrases in subject position (in theme position);
- 5) the use of short words (“bid” instead of “attempt”);
- 6) the widespread use of puns, word play and alliteration;

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