

Role and functions of a newspaper headline

Kuanysh Sovetuly Yergaliyev, Yeldana Bakytovna Asanbayeva, Botakoz Shaykenkyzy Kuralkanova, Assel Kayirbaevna Moldazhanova, Samal Zhanatkyzy Yergaliyeva

Pavlodar State Pedagogical Institute, Mira Street, 60, Pavlodar, 140000, Kazakhstan

Abstract. This article deals with the theoretical aspects of a newspaper headline and defines the main trends in today's journalism. Exploring the scientific works of foreign and native linguists, as well as analyzing the mistakes, frequently made in current periodicals, the article offers a systematic classification of requirements for newspaper headlines, which could serve the "guidelines" for today's journalists, when composing the headlines, and, first of all, help readers in searching the needed information in the columns of various periodicals.

[Yergaliyev K.S., Asanbayeva Y.B., Kuralkanova B.S., Moldazhanova A.K., Yergaliyeva S.Z. **Role and functions of a newspaper headline.** *Life Sci J* 2014;11(11):540-543] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 94

Keywords: journalism, headline, function, recipient

Introduction

Journalism is a powerful tool for effective impact on the public consciousness. In this respect, newspaper plays a big role because "dialectical unity of organizing and semantic functions of persuasion and informative content function of communication are the basic balance that is specified extra-linguistically and is obliged to serve a literary language in the newspaper" [1, 43]. Feature of newspaper discourse is manifested in the fact that it has an integral element of article, namely headline. The nature and design of headline largely determines the icon of the periodical. Headline carries not only certain information about the content of the publication, but also performs many other additional features. In this regard, a special attention in linguistics is paid to the study of functions and basic requirements to the newspaper headlines.

For many years, linguists, exploring the expressive possibilities of diverse newspaper headlines, are trying to give the headline the truest definition.

In his paper "The Language of Newspapers" D. Reah gives the following definition: "The headline is a unique type of a text. It has a range of functions which specifically dictate its shape, content and construct. It summarizes the whole story in a minimum number of words, attracts the reader to the story and, if it appears on the front page, attracts the reader to the paper" [2, 13].

Garst R.E. and T.M. Bernstein consider headline a form of phrasing that has its own standards to comply with: "The headline is one of the best scales, by which to measure the importance of a news story, at least in the editor's estimation" [3, 103].

According to I.R. Galperin: "The headline (the title given to a new item or an article) is a dependent form of newspaper writing. It is in fact a part of a larger whole. The main function of the

headline is to inform the reader briefly what the text that follows is about. English headlines are short and catching, they compact the gist of new stories into a few eye-snaring words" [4, 302-303].

Headline, as a linguistic phenomenon, attracts attention of the today's Russian and Kazakh linguists (Surova D.S. [5], Grim A.A. [6], Dotsenko M. Yu. [7], etc.).

Despite the difference in the definitions of a newspaper headline by various scientists, they all agree that *the headline is a short form of expression and consolidation of the information, contained in the article*. However, the opinions of scholars differ on matters relating to the requirements for newspaper headlines. In this article we will make an attempt to find the very requirements to be met by the headlines of journalistic articles.

Main part

The early works of foreign scientists show the trend whereby the headlines should not only serve a guide for the readers, but also a means of giving the newspaper appeal. Scientists R.E. Wolseley and L.R. Campbell mention the following requirements for a newspaper headline.

1. To give reader information about the news in the article, helping him to decide whether he wants to receive such information, as well as to make an attempt to bring him to the reading of the full text.

2. To make a newspaper page typographically attractive: "Few persons would read a magazine or a newspaper that was nothing but solid reading matter" [8, 330].

It should be noted that the headline is intended primarily for readers, guiding the recipient in his search for the right information without loss of time. Therefore we can scarcely say that the headline is intended to give the fairness and attractiveness to the publication columns. According to the research

by R.E. Garst and T.M. Bernstein, initially the American newspapers had no headlines, and recipients, as expected, read them completely from title-page to colophon. And just in course of time, with the increase in number of periodicals and decrease in number of recipients, reading the newspaper (or magazine), the editors began to use "article summary" that, as a rule, was printed in large or bold type at the very beginning of the article to highlight it.

We cannot deny that the current headline designs make the newspaper more systematic and structured, though this is not a requirement for journalistic headlines.

Also in the writing of W.L. Rivers "The Mass Media: Reporting, Writing, Editing", author mentions the attractiveness aspect of the periodical. According to the author, headlines must meet the following criteria: 1. capture the reader's attention; 2. convey the essence of the story; 3. symbolically evaluate the news; 4. make the newspaper more attractive [9, 288].

One important feature of the above requirements classification is that it refers to such a very significant additional function as the author's assessment. Indeed, the journalist does not always have the opportunity to openly express in his journalistic work his thoughts to what is happening, because he is a kind of "blank page", which just passes the information to society with its first word or scene. In this case, the author can "hint" to reader his own point of view, openly or using hidden meaning in the headline.

Daniel Dor in his article "On newspaper headlines as relevance optimizers" explores the process of reviewing the articles' headlines, given by the correspondents of Israeli national newspaper "Ma'ariv", by chief editor. Author analyzes and provides examples of situations, where a "draft" version of the article headline is not approved due to the mismatch with the "requirements". And then, on the basis of his own observations, author formulates these requirements. According to his conclusions, the headline should: 1) be as short as possible; 2) be clear, easy to understand and unambiguous; 3) be interesting; 4) contain new information; 5) do not assume the information unknown to the reader; 6) include names and concepts with high "news value" for the reader; 7) not contain names and concepts with low "news value" for the reader; 8) "connect" the story to previously known facts and events; 9) "connect the story" to prior expectations and assumptions; 10) "frame" the story in an appropriate fashion [10].

This classification is controversial and has been subjected to scientific criticism by linguists

around the world. However, it should be noted that the author warns that these ten points are not required for each journalistic headline. For example, he interprets the first requirement: "the newspaper headline should be as short as possible" as follows: when making a choice between a long and a short headlines in journalism, preference is given to the second one, and so with each of the requirements. In his view, the headline of a newspaper article, which will meet all of these requirements, can be considered ideal in journalism.

However, this classification contains many controversial issues that are difficult to accept. For example, point 4 can be considered logically opposite to points 5 and 8, while point 6 is synonymous to point 7. In addition, in journalism, it is very difficult to provide "clear and unambiguous" headline to be interesting at the same time: today's journalists are increasingly resorting to the so-called language-game, when the authors, using ambiguity of the headline, are trying to attract the reader's interest in the article.

Under the "names and concepts with high "news value" for the reader", author has in mind such famous names of people, as well as events that carry large amounts of contextual information to the recipient. To us they are more commonly known as precedent texts. However, again, it is difficult to assume the presence of such names and concepts to be necessary parameter for the headline. This applies more to the grammatical construction of the headline, that is, its expressiveness; though the author himself has the right to decide whether to use them in the headline of his article or not.

With so many requirements Daniel Dor believes that the headline should also play the role of a "fair frame" with a presentable appearance. And this is exactly the grammatical construction, which was mentioned above.

As for our countries, in Kazakhstan, as in Russia, many linguists take a more concise classification of a newspaper headline functions that was put forward in 1989 by E.A. Lazareva. According to her scientific work "Headline in the newspaper", the headline of the article in journalism should meet three basic requirements: 1) be informative; 2) comply with the content; and 3) have correct grammatical construct (or emphasis) [11].

Contrary to the requirements of the above foreign linguists, this paper does not neglect such an important aspect, as the concordance of the headline to article's content. Indeed, in pursuit of a vibrant and intriguing headline, authors often go too far that leads to defective headlines, where headline of the article only partly corresponds to its content, or sometimes does not correspond at all. If formerly almost all the

headlines were composed based on certain principles, now that journalism is rest on the "freedom of expression" law, journalists are struggling with might and main to attract as more readers to their articles as possible, and begin to stronger press on "expression pedal". At that, the authors often make the mistake when removing the focus from the "matching to content". After all, if the author promises in a headline one thing, while the article deals with quite different things, the reader may be disappointed and just abandon not only from a particular author, but from the periodical as well. This clearly demonstrates the importance of compliance of the article's content with its headline.

Analyzing various capabilities of newspaper headline, we would like to note the diversity of its functions. In this connection, we consider it necessary to examine the requirements for newspaper headlines, distributing them into two groups: the overriding (main) and secondary (additional) ones.

Overriding (main) requirements put forward those parameters, which should be met by all journalistic headlines, regardless of article's publishing place, time, specialization, the author and other indirect factors.

First of all it concerns certainly *informative* function. Any headline is primarily intended to quickly and briefly inform the recipient about the contents of the article. Originally they have been created exactly for this reason. However, looking through today's publications, one may notice that journalists summarize their articles in the headlines in varying degrees. Therefore, we believe it rightful to separate all headlines into two categories depending on the extent, to which the headline reflects the semantic information of any part of the text, i.e. to consider fully informative and less informative headlines.

Fully informative headlines inform the recipient about particular semantic of a text component to the full extent. Most often they reflect the theme of the entire journalistic work, or the basic idea, or give at least brief outlines, elucidating the basic idea.

Such headlines are most often neutral in terms of emphasis and expressivity, thereby, on their background, the headlines with more lively grammatical construct "catch the eye" of the recipient.

Fully informative headlines on the columns of today's periodicals are often found in the form of complex headings. Such headlines are composed of two (or even more) parts. They can be found in different forms, though the most common are the following:

Headlines, whose parts are interconnected by a colon, where usually first part is referred to general provisions, while the second part provides some details and/or clarification: "*Zhanaozen: life comes back to normal*" ("Kazakhstanskaya Pravda" (hereafter KP), 22.12.2011); "*SuperJet: not a competitor; but the contestant*" ("Rossiyskaya Gazeta" (hereafter RG), 20.03.2007).

Headlines in form of parceling construct. Parceling is "dismemberment of a single syntactic construct of the sentence, in which it is embodied not in one, but several intonation and semantic voice units, that is, phrases" [12]. In parceled headlines the reader's attention is intentionally focused on disconnected component. For example: "*Retire later? It's too early*" (KP, 28.03.2012), "*Ultimatum to Europe. How to react?*" (RG, 21.07.2005).

Headlines, whose parts are connected by conjunction "and", "or", etc.: "*Make a portal transparent, or why government settled in the web*" (KP, 14.12.2010).

Also there may be headlines, consisting of a few sentences: "*Khan lost his head twice. First, it was cut off, and then lost*" ("Express K" (hereafter EK), 20.09.2002).

Less informative headlines reflect the thesis not to the full extent, though focusing just on its part. Sometimes they contain only the sign of the subject. Reading such headline, the reader receives just the sign of the text content, whereas a "comprehensive picture" is perceived only after reading the whole thing. Although the informative value of such headlines is less than that for fully informative headlines, they provide more opportunities for journalist to attract the reader's attention. Therefore, today such headlines are widespread in various periodicals.

Second basic requirement, which should be met by the newspaper headline, is **correspondence with the article content**. Hardly anyone would have liked, if he buys at the store an item with the label on its wrapping that says one thing, and coming home and unwrapping the purchase understands that he has bought a completely different thing, which is not appropriated to his needs. The same occurs in journalism. Taking in hand a newspaper or magazine, the recipient must be sure that he will not face with such an incident. Therefore, journalists must strictly adhere to this requirement.

Secondary functions of a newspaper headline are not compulsive as the priority ones, though are recommended.

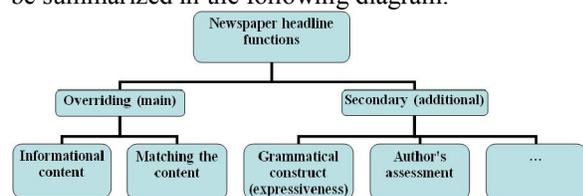
First of all, this is **emphasis of a newspaper headline**. Unlike previous functions, this aspect of journalistic headline "works" more for a journalist. Imaginative and expressive headline is a kind of bait

for a news-writer hunting to potential reader. Journalists use various means to “brighten up” their articles. These include a broad range of techniques from the tropes and figures to author’s nonce words. Fantasy of today’s publicists have no limits. For example, the article "White negligence people" (EK, 12.04.2007), where author "reworded" the well-known phrase "men in whites", not only expertly adding expressiveness to the article’s headline about HIV-infected children in South Kazakhstan region, but expressing in such a way the author's own attitude.

This implies another required function of newspaper headline: *author's attitude* in the headline does not simply express the views of the sender to the subject, but also recreates some contrast for the recipient. When reading the headline and learning the author's evaluation, the reader refers to the text of the article and then compares his own inferences with the author’s viewpoint, making certain conclusions. In other words, if the headline contains the author's assessment, the addressant enters into deeper discourse with the addressee.

Journalist is like the chef cook, while the article is a dish: the sauce that is prepared to serve the dish will have a direct impact on how this dish will be perceived by tasters. Depending on what kind of seasoning and spices will be added to the sauce, it will change its taste. In journalism all is exactly the same: a newspaper headline can manifest itself in various additional functions (communicative, cognitive, etc.); all depends on the author’s whim. There are no particular restrictions on the headline functions.

Thus, the newspaper headline functions can be summarized in the following diagram.



Conclusions

Thus, in this article we offer classification of newspaper headline functions that is based on studies of foreign and native linguists. Paramount requirements include informativeness and compliance of article headline to its content. All headlines of op-ed pieces should first of all meet these parameters.

On the basis of the material studied, we came up with the following conclusions:

- today’s article headline gives one the opportunity to learn the language in its present state;
- not all newspaper headlines reflect the content of an article;
- the majority of article authors ignore the requirements that must be taken into account when composing the headline of journalistic articles.

The presented classification could serve the "guidelines" for today’s journalists, when composing the headlines, and, first of all, help readers in searching the needed information in the columns of various periodicals.

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Yergaliyev Kuanysh Sovetuly
Pavlodar State Pedagogical Institute,
Mira Street, 60, Pavlodar, 140000, Kazakhstan

References

1. Kostomarov, V.G., 1994. Language taste of era. From observations on the speech practice of mass-media. Moscow, pp: 171.
2. Reah, D., 1998. The Language of Newspapers. London, New York: Routledge: International Ltd., pp: 126.
3. Garst, R.E. and T.M. Bernstein, 1961. Headlines and Deadlines. USA: New York: Columbia University Press, pp: 237.
4. Galperin, I.R., 1977. Stylistics. Higher School, pp: 405.
5. Surova, D.S., 2008. Headline as a component of journalistic (newspaper) text in pragmatic aspect, PhD thesis, Astana.
6. Lyutaya, A.A., 2008. Today’s newspaper headline: structure, semantics, pragmatics, PhD thesis, Volgograd.
7. Dotsenko, M.Yu., 2009. Syntax of a newspaper headline: structure, semantics, text semantic development forecasting, PhD, St. Petersburg.
8. Wolseley, R.E. and L.R. Campbell, 1946. Exploring Journalism. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., pp: 636.
9. Rivers, W.L., 1964. The Mass Media: Reporting, Writing, Editing. New York, Evanston, and London: Library of Congress, pp: 531.
10. Dor D., 2003. On newspaper headlines as relevance optimizers. Journal of Pragmatics, 35: 695–721.
11. Lazarev, E.A., 1989. Headline in the newspaper. Sverdlovsk, pp: 96.
12. Ivanchikova, E.A., 1977. Parceling, its communicative, expressive and syntactic functions. Russian language and Soviet society: The morphology and syntax of the contemporary Russian literary language. Moscow: 277-301.

6/3/2014