Analyzing Linguistic Features in Selected Newspaper Headlines Related to Brexit

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تحليل الخصائص اللغوية في عناوين صحفية مختارة متعلقة ببريكست

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Abstract:

The language employed in the realm of media, particularly in headlines, exhibits a diverse array of linguistic characteristics. This is due to the newspaper reporters' endeavor to convey more than what is written by utilizing certain linguistic elements. The issue at hand is predicated on the notion that the majority of newspapers utilize linguistic features that define their writing style. Moreover, these linguistic features engender ambiguity and complexity in comprehending and interpreting the core meaning of the headlines. The present study contributes to our comprehension of the variation in media language, the stylistic components in newspaper writing, the challenges in interpretation, the strategies employed in audience communication, the application of analytical models, and the underlying motives behind linguistic choices. The primary objective of this study is to analyze a selection of political headlines from English newspapers. It aims to demonstrate how newspaper writers communicate with the audience through the headlines, both explicitly and implicitly. The linguistic analysis of English political headlines in this study is focused on a renowned newspaper known as TIME. Four models, namely Westley's (1959), Abbott's (1981), Pehar's (2001), and Garst and Bernstein's (1961) are employed to analyze (30) selected headlines related to Brexit. The study concludes that linguistic features are deliberately and creatively utilized for various purposes, such as capturing the reader's attention, employing aesthetic language, and presenting vivid news, among others.

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الملخص:

تظهر اللغة المستخدمة في ميدان الإعلام، وخاصة في العناوين، مجموعة متنوعة من الخصائص اللغوية. يعود ذلك إلى محاولة صحفيي الصحف لنقل أكثر مما هو مكتوب عن طريق استخدام عناصر لغوية معينة. تقوم المسألة على الافتراض بأن الغالبية العظمى من الصحف تستخدم خصائص لغوية تحدد أسلوب كتابتها. وعلاوة على ذلك، تُثير هذه الخصائص اللغوية اللبس والتعقيد في فهم وتفسير المعنى الأساسي للعناوين. تساهم الدراسة الحالية في فهمنا للتباين في لغة الإعلام، والعناصر الأسلوبية في كتابة الصحف، والتحديات في التفسير، والاستراتيجيات المستخدمة في التواصل مع الجمهور، وتطبيق النماذج التحليلية، والدوافع الكامنة وراء الخيارات اللغوية. الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو تحليل مجموعة من العناوين السياسية من الصحف الإنجليزية. وهو يهدف إلى إظهار كيفية تواصل كتاب الصحف مع الجمهور من خلال العناوين، سواء بشكل صريح أو ضمنيًا. تركز التحليل اللغوي للعناوين السياسية الإنجليزية في هذه الدراسة على صحيفة مشهورة تعرف بـ TIME. يتم استخدام اربع نماذج, وهي نموذج ويستلي (١٩٥٩)، ونموذج أبوت (١٩٨١)، ونموذج بيهار (٢٠٠١)، ونموذج جارست وبرنشتاين (١٩٦١) لتحليل (٣٠) عنوانًا مختارًا يتعلق ببريكست. تستنتج الدراسة أن الملامح اللغوية تُستخدم بشكل متعمد ومبدع لأغراض مختلفة، مثل جذب انتباه القارئ، واستخدام اللغة الجمالية، وتقديم اخبار واضحة, وغير ذلك.

1.   Introduction

Headlines were selected as the main point in this paper because of their particular writing style and their effect on readers. Conboy (2005:13) demonstrated three functions of headlines. First, they present a summary of the news. Second, they draw attention. Third, they offer an initial indicator of content. Headlines are placed above news story due to their critical function of presenting readers abridged, however informative summation of the news. A headline is "the first indicator of the content and perspective of the story which follows" as Conboy (2005, 17) underscored. Nevertheless, Stipanović (2017:12) emphasizes that in publication, the headline can appear on the front page and the article on another distinct one, and thus headlines are often separate from its text. Furthermore, to get the reader's attention and specify the value and content of the story, headlines are scripted in big font size. Consequently, readers after examining headlines will effortlessly decide on interesting and essential news to read.

Divulging the social, cultural, and national representations in a community, newspaper headlines, also called caption, aid as precursors to news reports (Taiwo, 2007 cited in Robert, 2020: 93). To interest readers, they are well shaped. The headlines are purposively organized to speak the mind of the presenter or

publisher. Hence, Tabe and Fieze (2018: 65) highlight that the content which is politically angled and ideologically drawn is reflected by the figure and construction of a headline.

News headlines are regarded as the "eyes" or "windows" readers use to have the fundamental and keynote information in articles due to their function of setting a summary of articles as well as ascending readers' curiosity and grasping their attention to direct them to a particular expressed idea. To put it differently, assisting the reading process and allowing the readers to simply select the information instantly when browsing (Shi 2014 cited in Karazoun and Abdelmajid 2016:171). Accordingly, to fascinate readers with well-known news headlines, designers try to implement unusual printing or graphical techniques such as beautifying newspaper pages and using diverse fonts, sizes, colors, and structures. Roohani & Esmaeili (2010) assert that besides the use of news headlines as a semantic summary or an eye-catching means of public media, they are communicative devices that construct the finest link between the heart of the story and readers' elucidations. An ultimate inquiry into the communicative role of news headlines is answered overtly by Dor (2003) which is that they are "relevance optimizers" or "textual negotiators" between stories and their readers.

Leech & Short (1981) explain that the analysis of language includes the exploration of aspects of meaning drawn not from

characters of vocabulary and construction, but the choice of utterances and their relation to the context in which they are articulated. Hasan (2020:42) further adds that an effective headline aids readers in comprehending the maximum amount of contextual effects effortlessly since headlines give readers clues about articles. Conversely, headlines are made difficult not because of their semantic or pragmatic attraction, but because their power and meaning lie in their cultural, political, and general knowledge (Dor, 2003: 719).

2. The problem of the study

The problem of this study is based on the proposition that the majority of newspapers use linguistic features to establish their style of writing. Moreover, linguistic features make ambiguity and difficulty to grasp the nucleus meaning of headlines.

3. The Hypotheses

The language used in media, especially in headlines has numerous linguistic features because newspaper reporters are expressive in their writing using some linguistic aspects.

4. The Aims and the Scope

The study aims to analyze some selected political headlines related to Brexit from English newspapers. It intends to demonstrate how newspaper writers communicate with the

audience through the headlines, both explicitly and implicitly. The linguistic analysis of English political headlines in this study is limited to one of the famous newspapers known as TIME.

5.   Defining Newspapers

Newspapers are the most conventional channels for news and other types of written communication since they print, publish, and document precious stories to society at any time. Thus, they are trustworthy and credible records of substantial subjects and events and the time of their occurrence. They are sources of textual evidence beneficial for students, researchers, journalists, administrators, lawyers, Politicians, and the larger society. Also, admirable memories of a country's historical events are presented by them (Ugah,2009:2).

(Abdulla & Salih 2012: 193) believe that people learn information about many fields through language use in newspapers. Therefore, the main functions of newspapers are informational and directive. Newspapers are directive because of their power to affect and convince readers. In addition, Richardson (2007:13) states that the language of newspapers can lead to consequences that affect society. There are distinct styles in newspapers because of the different functions newspapers attempt to achieve such as informing, instructing, and entertaining the reader.

Furthermore, The language of media specifically newspapers is unconventional in different ways. These establish the style of journalistic writing. This does not negate the fact that individual differences of diverse writers affect newspaper writing. Those linguistic and stylistic points that are known to a whole corpus of journalistic writing are what we recognize and probe in the present study. For example, it is acknowledged that almost every newspaper has headlines (Agu, 2015:21).

Halliday (1985: 372) cited in (Abdulla & Salih 2012: 195) refers to headlines as " little texts. " That is because they deliver more through few words due to limited space. Thus, they have their own grammar, and this exceptional language is called ' block language '. It is defined by Mathews (2007:42) as the form of abbreviated structures employed in newspaper headlines, in cables, in notices, on labels of products, and so on.

6.   Brexit

In the summer of 2016, the world observed economic and political chaos in the United Kingdom. This country is famous for the lenience of its population, its institutions, and its external-looking foreign policy. In a close-call referendum, there was an individual decision to withdraw from the European Union (E. U.). Instability in financial markets, a political crisis, and a possible constitutional crisis due to the refusal of Scotland and Northern

Ireland to leave the E.U. occurred after the vote to leave on 23 June. The voting pattern showed plain differences between regions, generations, and countries within the United Kingdom. Scotland voted with a large majority to remain in the E.U. and there was a majority in Northern Ireland as well as in London while a large majority of electoral districts in provincial England voted to leave (Arnorsson & Zoega, 2018:2).

The neologism Brexit is defined in OED as "the (proposed) withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union and political processes associated with it." Coined in May 2012, this word rapidly became media currency in the United Kingdom and abroad. The political coinage became an internationalism, i.e., it has accomplished global recognition and appeared in other languages in its original meaning and form (Fomenko, 2023: 50). The word Brexit is coined from two words "Britain" and "exit."

7.   Data of Analysis

To analyze the newspaper headline, the data has been collected from the official website of Time (www.Time.com). The data is (30) headlines. The data in this study will be analyzed according to four linguistic models.

7.1. Westley's Model

Punctuation is employed in headlines as asserted by Westley (1953:136). Punctuation is used everywhere in newspaper

headlines. Furthermore, punctuation is regarded as a valuable adjunct when constructing headlines and it has to have a big share to communicate meaning. Before punctuating headlines, they are structured as sentences. The majority of the headlines' linguistic features will be examined using Westley's model.

7.2. Garst and Bernstein's Model

According to Garst and Bernstein (1961:110), unimportant words can be left out. These words can be possessive adjectives, auxiliary verbs, articles, verbs 'to be', and demonstrative adjectives. This model is intended to make headlines brief and more active.

7.3. Abbott's Model

Abbott (1981:102-104) proposes a linguistic model that focuses on the structure and vocabulary used in headlines. Vocabulary presented in headlines may have different meanings in comparison with ordinary language. He analyzes the verb system of headlines and provides a list of vocabularies utilized in news headlines such as the word *toll* which means in common language several people.

7.4. Pehar's Model

Pehar (2001) offers another model for analyzing the linguistic features of news headlines. According to his model, ambiguity is divided into three types:

1.   Lexical ambiguity: it happens when a word has many potential meanings. Nonetheless, lexical ambiguity occurs because of homonyms, polysemy, and homophones.

2.   Syntactic ambiguity: it is also called structural or grammatical ambiguity. However, the word syntactical is preferred because this type of ambiguity depends on the syntactical relations between words, phrases, and clauses of sentences.

3.   Textual ambiguity: it relies on the elusiveness between distinct parts of a text.

8.   Analyzing Linguistic Features of Headlines

Hadidi (2022:5) illustrates that media has a significant role in influencing society. News headlines include a careful use of linguistic devices to produce exceptional and diverse headlines. They are also used to affect people and encourage them to read the story or the report and make trust for the newspaper. Similarly, Abbott (1981:102) points out that a journalist should keep in mind two considerations when writing a headline because sometimes headlines are quite difficult for readers to understand. First, journalists have to grab readers' interest using exclusive language. Second, they need to give readers a brief idea of the main story using rationed space. The crucial aim of this analysis is to identify

the linguistic features used in headlines such as capitalization, ambiguity, modification, the use of vocabulary, the use of nouns as adjectives, and deletion.

9.   Punctuation

The use of punctuation in headlines has one main reason which is to make the meaning clear and to save space. There are ten marks of punctuation according to Westley (1953:136). Every one of them preserves linguistic features in headlines.

9.1 Comma

To separate the items in a string dependent or independent clauses, it is necessary to use a comma. There are two reasons for using commas:

1.   To save space: you can save space by replacing the conjunction "and" with a comma.

2.   Splitting ideas: you can separate two ideas or news perspectives in headlines.

Headline 1: Deal, No Deal, or No Brexit: The Scenarios Facing Britain.

9.2 Period

Full stops are carefully used in headlines. There will be a loss of space if full stops are employed. Full stops in headlines aren't applied to show the end of a sentence, but they are used with an abbreviated word or words such as the U.K. However, they are

vital if the text continues on the same line immediately after the full stop.

Headline 2: Brexit Has Revived the Prospect of a United Ireland. Could It Actually Happen?

9.3 Question Mark

Question marks are avoided in headlines. However, they are possible to use when appropriate. Question marks are crucial if the content provides answers to the headline question.

Headline 3: What Is a No-Deal Brexit? Here's How It Could Affect the UK

9.4 Capitalization

Headlines are written with initial capital letters similar to titles. Nevertheless, some headlines include *is* and *are* written with capital letters even though they are used as auxiliary verbs.

Headline4: Theresa May and Britain Are in a Brexit Disaster

9.5 Colon

It is used cautiously in headlines. To present a subject, list, and direct quotation, writers of headlines sometimes use colons.

Headline 5: Britain and Europe Before Brexit: A Complicated Relationship

9.6 Hyphen

It is not used to break a word from one line to another. However, it serves another goal which is to link two words to

modify another item. The latter can be a head noun. Thus, it can be used in adjectival phrases.

Headline 6: Europe's Anti-Border Culture Will Survive a Post-Brexit World

9.7 Apostrophe

It is mostly misused in English punctuation. It is chiefly used in two situations; It shows contradictions, and it can express possession. Therefore, it is restrictedly employed in writing headlines.

Headline 7: Banksy's Brexit Mural Disappears From Side of U.K. Building

9.8 Quotation Marks

Essentially, direct quotations and unusual words are enclosed with quotation marks. Time newspaper uses both single and double quotation marks, though it seems that the former is preferable since single quotations save space and are more attractive.

Headline 8: Could Queen Elizabeth Stop a "No Deal" Brexit?

Headline 9: The U.K.'s 'Brexit dream' has Become a Waking Nightmare

10. Special Vocabulary

Iļjina (2016:92) states that special vocabulary is used in headlines to create vividness, transfer emotions and attitudes, and magnetize readers. Agnes (2003:95) explains that newspaper

headlines have a special vocabulary that is not found in everyday language. Furthermore, it can have various meanings used for dramatic purposes depending on the implied messages.

Headline10: Brexit Is Still a Hot Mess

'Hot mess' means that something is emphatically in excessive confusion and disorder.

11. Unique Uses of Tenses

Newspaper articles seldom use the structures that are common in standard English and identifiable by grammarians. Unique tenses are employed for various reasons such as to make the news more engaging and attract the attention of readers.

11.1 Present Simple

Present tense is the most frequent tense used in headlines because journalists will be able to present their news in a vivid fresh way. Writers utilize both conventional and historic present.

Headline11: Theresa May Sets Britain on Course for a Hard Brexit

11.2 Present Progressive

It is used to refer to present-time events and in headlines, the copula (be) verb is deleted.

Headline 12: Theresa May Considering Plan to Delay Brexit: Report

11.3 The infinitive

To make the news more dramatic and immediate, headlines use a to-infinitive form which denotes future events.

Headline13: Delta Airlines to Cut Capacity to United Kingdom

11.4 Passive

In headlines, the auxiliary verbs are expunged and merely the past participle form of the verb is used.

Headline 14: Britain Set for December Election After Brexit Delayed Again

12. Nouns Use as Adjectives

Nouns as adjectives are one of the linguistic features analyzed in this study. Hodgson (2013: 127) asserts that nouns as adjectives are beneficial shortcuts to recognizing a topic without employing many expressions. They are often compound words. In the headline below, the word 'Iraq' is a noun but it is used as an attributive adjective to refer to a visit concerning or related to the U.K.

Headline15: President Obama Pushes Against 'Brexit' During U.K. Visit

13. Abbreviations and Acronyms

Caon (2016:11) demonstrates the differences between these two terms. Abbreviations are short forms of words or phrases intended to save time and space especially if the space is not enough to write the complete word. On the other hand, acronyms

are subsets of initialisms;i.e. the initial letters of words, and they can be articulated as a word such as the word PET. News headlines usually have abbreviations and acronyms as one of their linguistic features.

Headline16: Obama on Brexit: U.K. 'Special Relationship' Won't Change

   The U.K. is used in this headline to refer to the United Kingdom.

Headline 17: Donald Trump's 'Brexit Plus' Victory Leaves British MPs Cold

MPs are presented in the headline above to stand for the British members of parliament.

14. Pre-modification

   In general, modifiers are used to modify a word or a structure and they are divided into pre- and post-modifiers depending on their position whether they occur before or after the head noun. In addition, pre-modifiers according to Quirk et al. (1985:1321) that occur with the head of a noun phrase are lexical and grammatical elements. They are indeterminately complex and interrelated and they may precede the head of a noun phrase. Pre-modification includes all the elements positioned before the head except determinatives. In this study, five major pre-modifiers are recurrently employed in the language of headlines.

14.1 Adjectives

Headline 18: U.K. and European Union Agree New Brexit Deal

14.2 Nouns

Headline19: Michael Gove Leadership Bid As Party Leader Tells Him Stop

14.3 Genitive s

Headline20: Theresa May's Brexit Speech Ruled by Rhetoric**,** Not Solutions

14.4 Participle (-ed)

Headline 21: U.K. Faces 'Consumer Panic,' 'Law and Order Challenges' From No-Deal Brexit, Leaked Government Document Warns

14.5 Adverbials

Headline22: Theresa May Slams E.U. Leaders Over Brexit 'Impasse'

15. Deletion

Garst and Bernstein (1961: 110) clarified that deletion is one of the regular linguistic characteristics of headlines. The majority of headlines do not have complete sentence forms. During the process of writing, unimportant words are omitted like auxiliary verbs, articles, demonstrative adjectives, and personal pronouns to make the headlines short and enthusiastic.

15.1 Articles

The majority of articles are deleted when writing headlines to save space and magnetize readers' interest. Since the erasure of

articles does not affect meaning, it is easy to omit them. In headline (24) the definite article is erased.

Headline 23: Parliament Could Overrule Leave Vote

The Parliament Could Overrule the Leave Vote.

15.2 Verbs (to be)

Headlines are epigrammatic sentences and therefore these verbs are deleted to save space and they do express new information.

Headline 24: Brexit Halloween Deadline Perfect for This Endless Nightmare

The Brexit Halloween Deadline is Perfect for This Endless Nightmare

15.3 Demonstrative Adjectives

Demonstrative adjectives are used to describe or refer to the noun and they point out new information about specific topics. Since their removal does not influence meaning, they are mostly left out.

Headline25: Macron Says UK Is Leaving EU in Dark on New Brexit Deal

Macron Says that UK Is Leaving EU in Dark on New Brexit Deal

15.4 Possessive Adjectives

They are used before nouns to indicate the possession of that noun. During the process of writing news headlines, these

adjectives are omitted. In this headline, the possessive adjective (her) is erased.

Headline 26: Nicole Sturgeon Announces Plan for Second Referendum

Nicole Sturgeon Announces Her Plan for the Second Referendum

15.5 Auxiliary Verbs

The deletion of auxiliary verbs is common in newspapers to provide a brief and clear summary of the main story. They are not essential elements, especially in progressive, perfect, and passive structures and thus they are left out.

Headline 27: Brexit Impact on British Economy Limited so Far

The Brexit Impact on the British Economy has been Limited so Far

16. Ambiguity

Lihong & Weijie (2018:247) explain that ambiguity is very complex. It occurs when a word, phrase, or sentence has two or more different interpretations. Sometimes it causes difficulties in the comprehension process. However, it has merits such as adding aesthetic color to words. When ambiguity is used, it encourages readers to have their understanding.

Pehar (2001:2) categorizes ambiguity in three main types illustrated in the following table below:

Type of Ambiguity	Headline	Interpretation
Lexical Ambiguity: it occurs with one word especially if it has more than one interpretation.	Jo Cox Shooting Makes a Difference	the word *shooting* has more than interpretation: a) This shooting incident of Jo Cox has made a significant impact. b) This act of shooting implies advocacy of gun control or addresses violence.
Syntactic Ambiguity: it happens when a sentence has two or more distinct interpretations even though the words are clear.	Twitter Explodes Following Announcements.	This headline has two interpretations: a) Temporal: the word *following* functions as a preposition reflecting a sequence of events. The explosion happened after the announcements. b) Casual: the word *following* functions as a participle verb demonstrating that the announcements caused the explosions on Twitter.
Textual Ambiguity: This occurs when there are inconsistencies between parts of a text. They are best exemplified in open-ended questions.	The British People Have Been Suckered	This headline is ambiguous since it is an open-ended sentence. Journalists use them to get readers' attention and keep them involved.

Table (1) Analysis of Ambiguity Types

Conclusion

The language of media has different linguistic features. Thus, the current study analyzed (30) headlines according to four linguistic models. The study displayed that journalists employ distinct linguistic features such as ambiguity, deletion, modification, use of special vocabulary, special tenses, abbreviations, acronyms, and punctuation marks. The study also specified the main causes behind this use of linguistic devices. First, journalists use these linguistic features to save space and speed reading. Second, journalists use these features in writing headlines to get readers' interest. Third, readers will understand the headlines although some elements are deleted due to their background or general knowledge. Fourth, some words are deleted and some unique vocabulary is used to magnetize readers' attention and make the language active.

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