

## News Media: An Outbreak of Headlines

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### Abstract

The present study was carried out to identify and analyze the linguistic features of news headlines in terms of the number of features given by Goumovskaya in his book *The Use of Language in Newspapers*. He gave the features which are applied to newspaper (a type of print media) headlines. In this study, the same features are applied to analyze the TV news channels. This study discusses the role of creativity in the language of news media, especially news headlines. This study is qualitative and descriptive. This study found that creativity left a long-lasting impression on the reader or listener, and it gives insight into the “background knowledge”. To understand this creativity, the reader or listener must have background knowledge; otherwise creativity will give way to ambiguity, which will be a non-interesting issue for readers and listeners.

**Keywords:** language, news headlines, stylistic features, ambiguity, and creativity.

### Introduction

Life without language cannot be imagined, because it is a way by which human beings communicate, and communication without language is hard to possible. For communication, many languages in the world are there, but among them, English is the most widely spoken used language. It's a lingua franca and is mostly used for international communication, commerce, education, politics, media, etc.

This study deals with the language used in the news headlines and aims to find out the linguistic features involved in making news headlines catchy and attractive. Whenever a news article or news story is read or listen, the first thing to be noticed is a headline. Firstly, the readers note the headlines of the article, and only after that decide whether to read it or not. Therefore, the headlines are one of the most important components of the piece of writing. Furthermore, Praskova (2009) writes, about the headline of the newspaper as, it is often the only thing that readers read in a newspaper, or at least, it is the first thing that everyone notices in a newspaper. It serves as a guide for the reader that helps to decide whether to continue reading the whole report or skip onto another one. So, the headline is the key aspect of the newspaper to attract the reader's attention.

### Literature Review

As far as language used in news media is concerned, several studies have been done especially on the headlines of newspapers.

The language of television news channels has been studied and discussed by many scholars.

According to Thussu (2008), over the sphere, the commercial norm of television news broadcast has become a widespread manifestation. To make the news text more entertaining, this norm urges broadcasters to majorly depend upon the language. The ingredient of entertainment has entered into the text as well as the program formats. Endless assistance in the program formats is due to the cut-throat competition to persuade more and more onlookers. Like talk shows of celebrities, programs with the component of certainty television, etc, can be glimpsed on news channels across the globe. As a consequence, a disposition to trivialize the public discourse has become a common scene in television journalism. While discussing the text of news television, Garg (2016) observed, “The definition of news is changing faster than our imagination. With national politics, film, and entertainment, crime and sports occupying nearly half of the total prime time of peak hours, i.e., 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. of major national news channels, one can understand the plight of other important segments of life requiring equal attention” (p. 131). Other issues also observed by many scholars, like TV news channels, raise a low voice on the very important issues, for example, fields like education, health, science & technology, environment, and agriculture. According to Sainath (2016), the Indian media is controlled mainly by three elements which are called ABC of media – Advertising, Bollywood, and Corporate Power.

Newspaper language is a combination of different stylistic features, a mixture of several kinds of material (Van Dijk, 1988:76). The language of the press may be said to be a special discourse which has its style and vocabulary. (Pop & Fetherston, 2005:49) cited in Pajunen (2008:5). Because of the wide range of content in a newspaper, Crystal (1989: 388) believes that "there is no probability of finding a single style of writing used throughout a paper, nor of finding linguistic characteristics that are shared by all papers. There are, of course, certain superficial similarities between newspaper styles arising out of the fundamental constraints of the medium". Interest has to be focused, captured, and maintained through the use of certain linguistic features such as frequent subheadings, short paragraphs, and accurate sentences. Wolseley et. al, (1946:119) point out that newspaper sentence structure and vocabulary must be chosen in such a way to convey as much meaning as possible to suit the needs of all readers.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study were the following:

1. To analyze and describe the linguistic features of news headlines of Hindi and Urdu news media, which helps in making the language effective.

2. To identify the creative aspect of the language used by the news writers to attract the audience towards the news headlines of Hindi and Urdu news media.

### **Research Methodology**

A qualitative approach has been applied in this study and adopts a descriptive design. Fifty headlines were selected from news channels and newspapers through non-random purposive sampling from the corpus of primary data. The newspapers are 'Dainik Jagran', 'Amar Ujala', 'Zee Salam', 'India TV' and 'Aaj Tak' news channels. The number of headlines chosen from each of the news sources is not uniform given that some newspapers may have more linguistic features, more creativity, and more ambiguous headlines than others. However, an attempt is made to give each news headlines an adequate representation.

Textual analysis is adopted in the study. The textual analysis is corpus-based as only the headlines that depict the features investigated are taken from the news source, presented and analyzed in the relevant sections of the style of news headlines with implications for stylistic effects on the reader. It argues that the acclaimed challenge of interpretation, which lexical ambiguity may pose, and forms the part of the stylistic work for the means of attracting attention. It invites the reader or listener to fall into the article or story covered by the writer with the wish that the meaning lapses are usually furnished by the stylistic context. This knowledge of pragmatic enrichment is crucial because the status at which a person comprehends the surplus of discursive meaning swirled by the media daily determines the degree of approval or denial of the dogmas overtly or covertly traded.

### **'Language' and 'News Media'**

*Media* is the plural of 'medium'. It is the subway which is employed to disseminate happenings, information, news, political messages, etc. It broadly includes television, radio, newspapers, the internet, etc. the pace of media has emerged in bringing the species across the globe closer.

Mozuraityte (2015) says that the world has become a small village with the rapid expansion of media.

The medium which is used in disseminating news to society is referred to as 'news media', like, newspapers, television news channels, etc. today's life is unimaginable without the 'media'. In the era of information and communication, there are various forms of mass media, news media is, one of the many, among them.

(i) Newspapers: the type of print media. It is the most coherent source of information throughout the public. The newspapers, as a form of mass media, is discerned for several years. It comes under print media and has its unique traits. Many people read newspapers to get ample of updates about events and happenings in the society.

(ii) Television News Channels: the type of electronic media, take advantage of electronic technology in broadcasting news. Television, fax, radio, the internet, etc are some types of electronic media.

Goumovskaya says that the language of news has its style, the language used in newspapers is recognized through his unique style of writing, and it is characterized by a specific communicative purpose and by its system of language. Due to the limited expanse, the information in newspapers is usually condensed and lay in columns, without omitting any of its legibility.

Goumovskaya (2007:1) states that the vocabulary used in newspaper writing has its specific features such as the intensive use of:

- a. Special political and economic terms, e.g. stability, anti-terror war, presidential vote.
- b. Abbreviations. News items, Press reports, and headlines contain different kinds of abbreviations, e.g. names of organizations, public and state bodies, political associations, etc. known by their initials are very common, e.g. *EU* (European Union), *WTO* (World Trade Organization).
- c. Neologisms. They are very frequent in newspaper vocabulary. The newspaper reacts very quickly to any new development in the society.

In this study, the same above points are explored in the headlines of newspapers as well as television news channels.

Bakhshandeh et al (2003) add some more points. He says news writing tends to be impersonal so that it may appear objective and hence news is written in the third person, uses direct speech or indirect speech which is attributed to someone other than the reporter, uses some passive verbs mostly to show their objectivity about an issue. News writing is about something that has taken place; so mostly written in the past tense. The language should be simple, using relatively short sentences and words and some uses of clichés that the whole audience understands. Very important point is that writing should be ‘punchy’- it must grab the reader's attention, for this, it often uses, short rather than long words, active verbs, concrete rather abstract vocabulary, sometimes writing is emotive and also uses colorful vocabulary and should use an adjective, though moderately.

### **News Headlines**

For the news information, the headline is the extensively valuable component and it in a way influences people. Its role is to introduce the text covered in the story or article. It attempts to persuade the reader’s attention and interest by informing them what the story is about, shortly and interestingly, but it does not often open in full form of the essence of the article and motivates readers to learn the offered information in detail. As a rule, headline is

produced in interesting eye-catching fonts and colours. Headlines are usually read first, and the information expressed is used strategically by the editors or headline writers.

### **Characteristics of Headlines**

According to Stovall (2011), to the news consumer, the headline should include just a limited number of carefully chosen words that will set the rhythm of news story.

"The best headlines both *tell and sell*, that is, they tell the reader quickly what the news is and persuade the reader that the story is worth reading" (Ludwig & Gilmore, 2005 as cited in Praskova, 2009, p. 9).

Firstly, a good headline persuades the readers to stop and dedicate their time to read the story. Such a headline catches reader's interest as well as it captures the essence of the story. The authors of headlines generally know pretty well what they want to say but, unfortunately, there are several obstacles, for example space or their abilities (vocabulary, creativity, knowledge of the language), that must be overcome while creating a headline (LaRocque, 2003 as cited in Praskova, 2009).

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (7th edition) defines the term headlines as the title of newspaper article printed in large letters especially at the top of the front page.

Newspaper headlines are often constructed in certain structures to specifically capture the highlights of news and stories in the newspapers. The headlines are often constructed to capture the interest of the readers since they determine whether people will eventually read the stories in the newspaper.

According to Ungerer (2000 as cited in Ehineni 2014, p. 28), "A headline describes news story in a few words, informs quickly and accurately and arouses the readers' curiosity." Similarly, to attract readers' attention, journalists make the headlines eye-catching so that readers become curious to know the content of the whole story. Also, newspaper readers often see the headlines before they read the news details of the events captured in the newspapers. Thus, the way language is used, and certain linguistic structures are constructed in newspaper headlines often have a great influence on the readers.

### **Functions of Headlines**

Different features of headlines function differently to attract the readers. According to Morley (1998 as cited in Jakimaviciute, 2013, p.9) some of the important functions of newspaper headlines are as follows, the headline attracts the reader's attention by summarizing the content creatively and beautifully summarizes the content of the article.

Therefore, the special kind of language is used in the headlines and it does not have informality in the formation and functions.

According to Bleyer, 2005 (as cited in Petrova, 2013, p.7), there are some features of headlines such as attractiveness, accuracy, conciseness, and concreteness. Attractiveness is to capture reader's attention and to cause desire to read an article. Accuracy in headlines involves avoidance of exaggerated and misleading messages and complete coherence between the title and the article. Conciseness in titles suggests containing of small amount of short words with the necessary connectives and particles, which fits to the format of newspaper. Concreteness in headline creates accelerated understanding and interest.

The primary functions of headlines involve the informative and descriptive function, i.e. the headlines inform about an event and describe the content of the news story, as well as impressive, due to their role in influencing reader's views and attitudes (Reah, 1998, as cited in Tereskiewicz, 2012).

### **Style as 'Special Usage' in the Realm of Headlines**

This kind of style, "special usage" covers the creative aspect of language. When writers use special language, they develop a style. Nils Erik Wellander (1948) remarks that, "style, in the linguistic sense, usually signifies every special usage contrasted against the general". Graham Hough (1969) says that, "language is the dress of thought, and style is the particular cut and fashion of the dress". These definitions related to language are very useful and linguistically oriented. In this study, the number of features presented by Goumovskaya, comes under this style. Headlines comprise a unique component of news stories also due to their stylistic shape.

Style, though very easy to explain, yet difficult to analyse. In a special context, by specific people, and for a particular purpose, style is the way to use a language. Style affects the writing it strengthens the touch with the reader and heightens their knowledge. Hence, in actual situations, style is always apprehensive with the connection between the participants.

According to Malmkjaer (2006 as cited in Jakimaviciute, 2013, p. 5), "Stylistics is the study of style in a spoken and written text. By style it is meant a consistent occurrence in the text of certain items and structures, or types of items and structures, among those offered by the language as a whole." Similarly, Hapsah (2008) adds to the understanding of the 'style' by saying that, it is the style that differentiates one writer from another. He stated that, style is not just an ornamental to writing; it results from the many choices the writer makes in the course of his/her writing which shows one writer different from the other. However, there is no single and actual explanation of the word 'style'. Every written and spoken discourse has a style. Style is the way of writing; it is use of the language in a given context.

According to Mathesius (1982 as cited in Mozuraityte, 2015, p. 15), "Style is a significant manner in which the linguistic means of expression has been employed or will usually be employed for a concrete purpose". In other words, style refers to ways of writing

or speaking how a person varies the resources of language to make speech or written discourse meaningful. Moreover, it can be stated that stylistics investigates devices in language which help to make utterance more descriptive, effective, and vivid.

To create written and spoken discourse meaningful, style has the feature of using the resources of language, makes one writer different from another writer.

Stylistics is the branch of linguistics that analyzes and describes features of style. In the words of Mozuraityte (2015), stylistic devices are not only used in literary styles but also in publicist and newspaper styles.

In a world of competition, one of the main features of any news agency is attracting the attention of the audience, because audiences have the power of choosing one news agency over the other. Language of news plays a vital role in making one fine content and headlines play a key role in attracting the attention of readers and leaving an impact on the reader. So, the newspapers employ certain features in the headlines. As explained earlier, the headline of a news story is the summary which introduces the story at the beginning of a news report.

Journalists use some of the key features for making any writing an aspect of aptitude in the language of news media.

### **Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion**

The data presented below will show that words used creatively are understandable and are aimed with background knowledge. Idioms in any language cannot be changed, and they are the words which are packed in their frame, but in news headlines, the idioms will play the role for background knowledge and helps in semantic understanding. Very consciously words are chosen to make any headline, here style as choice of words played very generously. Following headlines will show this more clearly.

#### **(I) Idioms**

##### **1. BEGANI SHADI ME ‘VHP’ DEEWANA (Aaj Tak/ 2-08-18)**

In the above headline, the sentence made on the idiom /beganı: ʃaḍı: mē əbḍullaḥ ḍı:wana ha/, əbḍullaḥ is replaced by abbreviated word VHP. The occurrence of VHP is expected to narrow down the meaning possibilities. VHP stands for “The Vishva Hindu Parishad”, it is an Indian Hindu organisation based on the ideology of Hindu nationalism.

##### **2. JO KHAYE WO ‘JAIL’ JAYE (Aaj Tak/ 9-07-15)**

The above headlines is made on the idiomatic phrase, /ʃaḍı: ka ləddu, jo kḥaye wo pacḥtaye, jo na kḥaye wo pacḥtaye/, thus the phrase is manipulated to give the target meaning to the audience about “someone who went to prison”, also in this headline half phrase is used which suits the context.

3. KAAM PAR NA KAAJ PAR, VOTE MANGE ‘GOTR-JAAT’ PAR (Aaj Tak /26-11-18)

Similarly, this headline is created to the analogy of background knowledge of expression, /kam ka na kaj ka dʊʃmən ənəj kə/, for this meaning can easily interpreted from the headlines itself, the given article must about politicians who demands votes on the basis of caste and not on the basis of work.

4. ‘JAIL’ AYE DURUST AYE’ (Aaj Tak/ 27-11-18)

In the same way, this headline is based on, /ðer aye dʊrʊst aye/, the headlines revealed that the news is about someone who deserve to be behind the bars.

5. MAAN NA MAAN ‘AAP’ SE AAP’ PARESHAN (Aaj Tak/07-09-15)

This news headlines are based on /mān na mān, maɪ ʃera mehman/, this news is must be about AAP, Aam Aadmi Party.

6. DOOBTE KO ‘TEEN’ KA SAHARA (Aaj Tak/ 27-11-18)

In the same fashion, above headline is based on /du:bte ko tʊnke ka səhara/, /tʊnke/ is replaced by /tʊ:n ka/.

7. 35A PAR 36 KA AANKDA

Article 35A of the constitution was an article that empowered the Jammu and Kashmir legislature, and ‘36 ka ankda’ denotes ‘conflict’, ambiguity must be raised if the background knowledge not available.

From the above headlines one point is very clear that the ‘message’ is important in order to make any effective headline. For that, both background knowledge (idioms in this case) and apostrophe (inverted commas) helps in comprehending that meaning. If these features do not work properly then meaning inferred by the news consumers is not correct.

Idioms are figurative expressions. The term refers to as a set of expression or a phrase comprising two or more words. An interesting fact regarding this device is that the expression is not interpreted literally but the phrase is understood as to mean something quite different from what individual words of the phrase would imply. Alternatively, it can be said that the phrase is interpreted in a figurative sense. Stylistic devices are used in poetry to attract the reader, similarly, news headlines also include this device to make the language attractive and catchy.

Abbreviation, which is used in a large quantity in news, is a shortened form of a word or phrase used chiefly in writing to represent the complete form. Crystal (2003, p. 1), says that “Abbreviations are widely used in headlines because they save space on page and they also require the readers to stop a little to think of the original word or expression.”

(II) Eponyms



Goumovskaya in 2007, defined various features of news headlines, in the following paragraphs his first point that is the intensive use of special political names or proper nouns are used. In this research, lexical items which are used so creatively by the news writer that it functions for limited space, and it reflects the sense of economy by less usage of words and more meaning evolved.

1. AMU SE NIKLA JINNA KA ‘JINN’ (Zee Salam/08-02-18)

In this headline, the story is about the politician “Jinna” and the word /jin/ is consciously chosen in order to make other figurative device that is “consonance”, /jinna/ and /jin/, and also evolved from the proper name ‘Jinna’ and it is about the issues on the person who is already dead (jin).

2. BADALTA ‘AMAR’ PREM

This headline is made after the famous politician named, Amar Singh. Though, this headline shows ambiguity at the lexical level. The famous compound word /əmar prem/ means the love which never dies. To understand, this kind of headline one must have background knowledge, otherwise it favours the perception with the original meaning. The inverted commas help in meaning interpretation.

3. MODI KA ‘MAYA’ JAAL (Zee Salam/16-08-18)

/maya jal/ is a compound word, which function as background knowledge, but here /maya/ is the name of politician ‘Mayawati’. This headline maintains to show ‘alliteration’, and also ambiguity at the lexical level would be found.

4. GAYI ‘SHARAFAT’ AATANK ME (Aaj tak/08-07-18)

/ʃərəfət/ stands for former Pakistan prime minister named, “Nawaz Sharif”

5. ZAKIR KA KHUDA ‘HAFIZ’ (Aaj Tak/ 08-07-18)

“Zakir” and “Hafiz” both are proper names, /xuða hafiz/ is in itself a Arabic compound word meaning “god bless you”. The creativity in the usage of words is very impressive.

6. KARNATAK KA SIYASI ‘NATAK’ (Zee Salam/01-05-18)

The headline must be about the city Karnataka, the choice of word is very much influencing and maintains the stylistic feature, alliteration, and consonance.

(III) Cultural Terms

1. TEEN TALAK KO ABHI ‘TALAK’ NAHI (Zee Salam/ 10-08-18)

2. TEEN TALAK KO ‘SARKAR’ KI TALAK (Zee Salam/ 15-12-17)

In the above headlines, the word play is used very interestingly and meaning deviated in the way that the meaning of first compound word ‘t̪i:n t̪əlaq’, the process of divorcing in Islam and second /t̪əlaq/ means ‘not permissible’ or ‘not acceptable’. The word play is a process involved in making up this headline. This headline maintains some stylistic devices

usage for making the news headlines as an act of creativity like, alliteration, consonance, and rhyme.

#### (IV) Neologism

##### 1. HALALA PAR GHER ‘HALALI’ DALEEL

In Islam, there is a word, /hələlə/, that finds its roots in /hələl/ that translates to something that is permissible, and therefore ‘lawful’. In order to show opposite meaning, that is ‘not permissible’ a new word /hələli:/ is created by replacing /ə/ with /i/ and also a compound word is created by adding prefix /yer/ to /hələli:/ is created through the process called ‘neologism’ by affixation.

##### 2. CONGRESS KA ‘PANJ’NAAMA (Zee Salam/ 26-03-19)

The word created /pənjnəma/ from the word /pəŋɳnəma/ after the symbol of congress party is “right hand with its palm facing front and its finger pressed together” in Hindi/Urdu that means /pənjə/, shortening of this word is /pənj/ added to the suffix /nəma/, and made on the analogy /pənc<sup>h</sup>nəma/.

##### 3. ‘NAMO’ste London (Aaj Tak/ 13-11-15)

##### 4. Khal’NAIK’ (Zee Salam/ 14-10-18)

The above two headlines framed after the Bollywood movie , “Namaste London” and “khalnayak”, the words are arranged in such a way that it extracted the proper noun “NAIK’ for ‘Dr. Zakir Naik’ and abbreviation of Indian prime minister NAMO stands for “Narendra Modi”. And in this way created new words (neologism) and also shows graphological deviation. Words within punctuation usually flashes the central ideas of the news. It must encapsulate the story in a minimum number of words, attracts the readers towards the story.

#### (IV) Ambiguity vanishes with the use of Punctuations

Many headlines discussed above also use punctuation like inverted commas. This also helps in removing ambiguity. Several other examples of this kind, of using punctuation, is exemplified below.

##### 1. ‘BAT’MAN VIDHAYAK KI MUSHKILEIN BADHI (India TV)

Batman is the superhero, and here batman stands for the ‘man’ (politician) who uses ‘cricket bat’ to beat someone.

##### 2. ‘KAR’NATAK ME SIYASI DRAMA (Zee Salam/ 27-06-19)

/natak/ from the state name /kərnatak/ is extracted out means the ‘drama’ in English, and again the word ‘drama’ is used in the same line.

##### 3. PAKISTAN KE A’ZHER’ PAR LAGEGA BAN (Aaj Tak/ 21-01-19)

The proper noun /əzhər/, the word extracted from this proper noun /zeher/ means poison and shows negativity in the headline related to the person name /əzhər/.

(V) Other stylistic devices

1. ALIGARH KI 'CHEEKH' SUNAI KYU NHI DETI

Here in this the stylistic feature, 'personification' comes into play.

2. PAKISTAN BANA IQLAETI KA 'JAHANNUM' (Zee Salam / 22-12-17)

Other stylistic device 'Exaggeration' is used in this headline.

3. 'HATH' SE CHHIN JAYEGA KARNATAK

Hath stands for 'Indian National Congress', symbolic meaning.

4. '70' SAAL BAAD '370' SE AZADI (Zee Salam/5-08-19)

Semantically, the number 370 stands for article 370 of the Indian Constitution which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir, the reader will naturally associate the phrase with Article and like-wise shows shortening in some way. On the contrary, further reading reveals that it is just a number. Had the phrase been enclosed in punctuation, this ambiguity would have been averted. Reah (2002) states, "Over time, headlines writers have developed the vocabulary that fulfils the requirements of the headlines, using words that are short, attention getting and effective."

**Conclusion**

The study is conducted to analyze the linguistic features. The results provide the following conclusions:

1. Language used in news stories violates the norms of writing concerning grammar and structure. The deletion and addition of certain items (like affix) is not always according to the norms of language. It is used only to attract the reader's attention.
2. To understand creativity in language, one must have the background knowledge of society, language, life, trends, movies, otherwise the headlines will become boring for listeners and readers of news. As creativity can be identified as ambiguous part of knowledge.
3. Punctuation marks play a very important role in interpreting the right meaning.
4. The writer tries to use stylistic devices, either in phonological form (rhyme, alliteration, consonance, etc) or, in graphological (font size, color, etc) or semantic form. One must find any devices, mostly in every headline.
5. News headlines provokes inquisitiveness, which draws the reader's attention forcibly to the discourse. Thus, the study concludes that while ambiguity provides interpretation challenges

for the reader, it is indeed a powerful stylo-semantic editorial strategy in the hands of an adept journalist.

6. It is not at all the case, that in one headline, only one stylistic feature is involved to show creativity. From the above data, it can be said that one same headline can come under different category of creativity.

7. Goumovskaya's features of news headlines are vigorously used by the news writer. At least one feature is involved in making news headlines catchy, and also sometimes, more than one feature is observed in news headline.

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