STRUCTURAL PARTICULARITIES OF NEWS HEADLINES

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Annotation

This article highlights some specific and common structural features of news headlines in the English language. Headlines of news are considered as the most crucial element in media discourse to attract readers' attention. Therefore, it has been always very challenging to understand the real meaning of news headlines for readers in a certain level because of having specific structural features of them in the content consisting with even known vocabulary. This work emphasizes the researches of Korean linguist, Hye-Kyung Lee's structural analysis on American news headlines.

Keywords.

media discourse, news headlines, news content, structural patterns, diachronic perspectives, verb-less construction, contrastive perspectives.

One widely agreed-upon aspect is that news headlines are a distinct sub-genre within media discourse. They are crafted to be able to be understood independently of the accompanying news articles. This means that readers should be able to grasp the main message or topic of the news story just by reading the headline itself. In a fast-paced media environment, headlines serve as a way to capture the attention of readers and provide a glimpse into the news content.

In communities where English proficiency is higher, the headlines can assume a certain level of language comprehension and may use more sophisticated vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, or wordplay. The goal in such cases would be to appeal to an audience that is well-versed in English and expects a certain level of linguistic complexity and nuance. The headlines may also assume a deeper understanding of cultural references and current events, allowing for more subtle or layered messaging.

The study of news headlines has been conducted from various perspectives, shedding light on their structural patterns and functions. Researchers like Bell and Ifantidou have made notable contributions to this field. In terms of structural patterns, Quirk highlights certain syntactic features commonly observed in news

headlines. These features include the use of the present simple tense, such as "*Meat Prices Rise Again,*" which provides a concise and immediate update on a recurring event. Additionally, the structure "To + Verb (base form)" is often employed to express future meaning, as seen in headlines like "*Senator To Seek Reelection.*" These structural choices help convey information efficiently and effectively within the limited space of a headline. Regarding the function of headlines, they have long been recognized as tools for summarizing news articles and capturing readers' attention. The summarizing function assumes that headlines represent the main points or key aspects of the corresponding news stories. By reading the headline, readers should gain a general understanding of the news content and decide whether they want to engage further by accessing the full article. As a result, readers should be cautious and aware that headlines may not provide a complete or fully accurate representation of the news story. Relying solely on headlines for information without accessing the full article can lead to a limited or potentially distorted understanding of the news.

Ifantidou and Dor, for instance, prove that readers tend to interpret headlines to optimally ration processing effort with cognitive effects, using the framework of Relevance Theory .They show that successful headlines involve an understanding of the readers' knowledge states, beliefs, expectations and cognitive styles. This point has a bearing with the second function of headlines: the attention-getting function. Since news readers tend to scan rather than read the headlines, news reporters or editors have to do their best to ensure their readers read the articles, especially in the case of online news. That motivates the reporters/editors to construct news headlines that are attractive to the readers. Several experimental studies reveal that readers show more interest in "attractive/creative" headlines than "informative/standard" headlines. News headlines are also investigated from diachronic perspectives or from contrastive perspectives. Neiger, for instance, put forth the argument that the construction of news headlines is strongly influenced by political or cultural factors. He proves his argument with such facts as the increase of highly speculative headlines during the Gulf War.

When it comes to English news communities with varying levels of English proficiency, the goals of headlines may differ, and writers should consider the target audience's language proficiency and other relevant factors. The audience's linguistic competence, cultural background, and familiarity with the subject matter can influence how headlines are constructed and the strategies employed to engage readers. In communities where English proficiency is higher, the headlines can assume a certain level of language comprehension and may use more sophisticated

vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, or wordplay. The goal in such cases would be to appeal to an audience that is well-versed in English and expects a certain level of linguistic complexity and nuance. The headlines may also assume a deeper understanding of cultural references and current events, allowing for more subtle or layered messaging.

On the other hand, in communities where English proficiency is lower, headlines may be crafted to cater to a broader audience with varying levels of language skills. In such cases, simplicity and clarity become crucial. The headlines might prioritize using plain language, avoiding jargon, and employing straightforward sentence structures. The goal here would be to ensure that the main message is easily understandable and accessible to readers with limited English proficiency.

The current study is an attempt to contribute an understanding of headlines written in English in different linguistic or cultural communities and to delve into the interrelation between the composition of headlines and extra-linguistic factors. Specifically, this study will look into how the structural patterns are influenced by the consideration of the readers of the headlines.

To analyze the headlines of English news articles published in America headlines of political news were collected from several online news sites. The articles were chosen from those published between November 2011 and January 2012. Among the various sections of news sites, headlines were sampled from politics sections.

The 100 collected American English headlines are classified according to structural patterns using a revised version of Lee's categories. Lee provided the categories in when classifying English headlines with typical examples and the occurrences:[133]

a. Noun Phrase: *Washington Scandal Update*

b. Complex Noun Phrase: *McCain to Focus on Having Enacted political Reform*

c. Declarative: *Veto of Spending Bill is Threatened.*

d. Interrogative: *Can Ted Stevens Still Win Alaska?*

e. Complex Sentences: *McCain sees Disaster if Bailout Bill Fails Again*

f. Subordinate Clause: *After I Win...Er, Make That, if I Am Elected*

g. Adjective Phrase: *Young, Republican and Inspired by Palin*

h. Prepositional Phrase: *Back From War, and Increasingly Into the Political Fray*

Categories in are slightly revised in the current study:

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[133] Lee, Hye-Kyung. On the headlines of English and Korean political news.Linguistic Research. 2009.

a. Noun Phrase + to Verb: *Panetta to Offer Strategy for Cutting Military Budget*
b. Verb-less: *Paul Voters Not Necessarily Party Voters*
c. Noun Phrase: *New Twitter User: Michelle Obama*
d. Simple Sentence: *Romney Sounds Increasingly Confident in Iowa*
e. Complex Sentence: *Oakland Reins Blister a Mayor Raised on Protest*

Our research brought up following results: the most predominant construction is simple sentences and notable characteristic regarding the use of simple sentences is that the vast majority of simple sentences are couched in the present tense. Out of 64 simple sentences, 56 examples are in the present tense. Among 56 headlines embedded in the present tense, only 3 headlines describe either future events or present events, while the remaining 53 present-tensed simple sentences refer to past events as shown in "Bachman Strikes Thatcher Comparison in Iowa". Hence it could be concluded that American English headlines employ the present tense mainly to report on past events, presumably for the space constraints inherent with the headline section or for the more vivid description of the reported events as historical present tense.

Except for – "Frustrated Gingrich Looks Past Iowa and Lashes Back at Romney", a complex sentences are presented in the present tense while referring to past events. Among the nine complex sentences, six sentences have the verb say as main verbs, as shown in – "*Defense Chief Says Israel Must Mend Arab Ties*". This demonstrates that the relevant headlines play the quoting role, rendering the relevant headlines authentic and realistic.

The second frequent pattern is verb-less constructions with 11 occurrences. The deleted verbs are mostly linking verbs such as be or become. The time-reference of the titles varies as in the sentence headlines: *a) Coming soon: Cain bus tour b) Iowa Rep. Steve King upset with Boehner.*

There are nine occurrences of the NP + to V construction. The key characteristic of this construction is that the NP position is all occupied by a proper noun such as *Panetta, Perry, Obama* and *Palin*. The sense intended to be delivered by the construction must be that the relevant public figure is expected to do the action described by the verb.

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