

LEVEL OF ALIGNMENT OF NEWS HEADLINES IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MEDIA OF UZBEKISTAN WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS



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Аннотация

Аввалроқ ўз битирув-малакавий иши доирасида Ўзбекистондаги инглизча тилининг ахборот воситаларининг лисоний ва жанр ўзига хосликларини тадқиқ қилган муаллиф ушбу мақолада дунё бўйлаб янгиликларга сарлавха қўйиш бўйича қандай стандарт ва тенденциялар шаклланишини кўриб чиқади ҳамжа Ўзбекистоннинг инглизча тилининг янгиликлар веб-сайтлари шундай глобал таомилларга мос келиши даражасини таҳлил қилади. Бунинг учун у маҳаллий ва хорижий ОАВлардаги сарлавхаларнинг лексикаси, грамматикаси, тузилиши ва нолисоний хусусиятларини солиштиришга уринади.

Аннотация

Ранее автором в рамках выпускной квалификационной работы были исследованы языковые и жанровые особенности англоязычных СМИ Республики Узбекистан. В настоящей статье автор сопоставляет международный стандарт и мировые тенденции в построении новостных заголовков и анализирует, соответствуют ли глобальным тенденциям заголовки узбекистанских англоязычных новостных сайтов. С этой целью автор сравнивает лексику, грамматические особенности, структуру и внеязыковую специфику заголовков в местных и зарубежных СМИ.

Abstract

Previously researched on the linguistic and genre specificities of English-language media of Uzbekistan as part of his graduation and qualification work, the author, in the article, looks through the international standards and trends worldwide on headlining news stories and analyzes whether Uzbekistan's English "speaking" news websites correspond to or align with those global conventions. For this, he intends to compare the lexis, grammar, structure and extra-linguistic features of headlines in local and foreign media.

Калит сўзлар: инглизча тили ОАВ, сарлавхалар, халқаро стандартларга мослик, грамматика, тузилиш, нолисоний хусусиятлар.

Ключевые слова: англоязычные СМИ, заголовки, соответствие международным стандартам, грамматика, лексика, структура, экстралингвистические особенности

Keywords: English-language media, headlines, international standards alignment, grammar, lexis, structure, extra-linguistic features.

The way international English-language media, including intended-for-global-audience *The Guardian* (theguardian.com), *The Independent* (theindependent.co.uk) and *The Telegraph* (thetelegraph.co.uk) operate, the way they deliver information, their style and particularly their headlining conventions are developed through a careful analysis of audience needs, their perception psychology and feedback.

How do media in developed countries, for instance, know whether the way they are writing the news is proper? How do they know that the communication they are holding with their audience is successful? There are several methods and a set of measures for such self-assessment.

The very first method is audience feedback. Public surveys conducted among readers, consumers of media information help to have an idea about the readership, the media's popularity and other features. Such surveys are also needed for advertising trading, as companies always seek an answer for the question “Who and how many people will read the ad?”.

In 1956, the National Readership Survey was established in Britain. Covering over 250 of Britain's major magazines and newsbrands, showing the size and nature of the audiences they achieve, the survey has introduced NRS PADD from September 2012. NRS PADD, the National Readership Survey Print and Digital Data (6).

Another method is the circulation or click-based analytics. The higher circulation records are going, the more it means newspaper is being positively accepted by the audience. The more clicks and visits there are, the better the news media's activity is going on. Furthermore, news media accept more comprehensive audience feedback in the form of letters to the editorial offices, comments on the articles below the post, reviews and reactions on social media pages of those media, etc.

In Uzbekistan, massive readership surveys have remained uncommon even for the past years, though online feedback through social media channels may be examples for the practices in media, English-language ones, in our case. We can see that they are addressed to communicate with their audience with the aim of improving the quality and assuring success of communication.

International standards or trends for newswriting are not set and regulated by some kind of journalists' unions or bodies of media regulation, but leading editorial offices develop their own manuals or stylebooks, which evolve on a regular basis with the correspondence to the audience interests and needs. In this regard, alignment with global standards and having national peculiarities are important for English-language media of Uzbekistan.

To have a look at some aspects of international standards alignment in news journalism, we examined headlining conventions in British and Uzbekistani media.

As headlines are introductory summaries of stories, on web newspapers they help visitors review and get acquainted with stories through one sentence containing all ‘WH’s of events/news. Dynamic events in the contemporary world make people face a big volume of information and they cannot manage to view each journalistic piece of writing. Therefore, a list of headlines given on the homepage guide people by the topics that are interesting to them. In this regard, headlines are read more than the articles themselves. From this perspective, headlines are considered to be the first step in impacting the audience perception, to our mind.

Outstanding scholar on discourse research Teun A. van Dijk have dedicated his years to discourse analysis matters and hidden manipulation in texts of different kind. Certainly, his researches do not except media studies. In his *Power and the News Media*, van Dijk scrutinizes structures and functions of text in a variety of contexts.

“The theoretical framework for this inquiry is articulated within the multidisciplinary field of discourse analysis, a domain of study in the humanities and social sciences that systematically examines the structures and functions of text and talk in their social, political, and cultural contexts. Applied to the study of mass communication, this approach claims that in order to understand the role of the news media and their messages, one needs to pay detailed attention to the structures and strategies of such discourses and to the ways these relate to institutional arrangements, on the one hand, and to the audience, on the other hand. For instance, topics or quotation patterns in news reports may reflect modes of access of various news actors or sources to the news media, whereas the content and form of a headline in the press may subtly influence the interpretation and hence the persuasive effects of news reports among the readers. Conversely, if we want to examine what exactly goes on if it is assumed that the media manipulate their readers or viewers, we need to know under what precise conditions, including structural properties of news reports, this might be the case”, he explains(4, 10).

Websites that work for a certain audience, be it locals or foreign citizens, most probably keep in mind that headlines are not just titles of articles as they used to be in good-old classical newspapering, but they are tools for creating a certain impression about one or another theme.

Lexis

In this regard, it is appropriate to have a look at what kind of vocabulary the headlines are using. First classification would be whether words are positive or negative, we see in the examples of theguardian.com:

Theguardian.com covered Brexit with skepticism, according to some specialists. Several headlines from the website can prove that the use of words with negative style.

*Article 50: Theresa May to call on UK to unite after letter triggers Brexit
May triggers article 50 with warning of consequence for UK.*

Having a look at the headlines on independent.co.uk about US Elections 2016, we can see that Trump's plans to strengthen cooperation with Russian Federation were accented with negative tone of voice:

*FBI has information suggesting Trump aides 'coordinated with Russia'
Donald Trump's team in 'frequent contact' with Russia despite denials (3).*

It is not an easy job for media to demonstrate its position and cover events from the angle of their interests, and at the same time to keep their reputation as an unbiased and trustworthy source. Bound to be impartial and unbiased, most media try to play with words, use quotations, alliteration, intertextuality and puns to position over events and processes. Theguardian.com uses unusual phrases from speeches of famous people in the headlines, addressing the **quotation method** in headlining:

*The world must unite like a 'flock of geese', says China's Xi Jinping
Brexit will leave 'a business support black hole,' says report.*

As well, **allusion** is common in theguardian.com headlines:

Trump told Xi of Syria strikes over 'beautiful piece of chocolate cake'.

“Piece of cake” is one of the common idioms in English, and here the story is about Xi and Trump talk over a cake, though idiomatic meaning of this phrase is used inside of the article. It is attractive for the readers.

Labour reveals 'fat cat' tax pledge aimed at reining in excessive pay.

According to Investopedia, fat cat is a slang word used to describe executives who earn what many believe to be unreasonably high salaries and bonuses. These top executives also receive generous pensions and retirement packages, consisting of extra compensation not available to other company employees(2).

George Osborne 'like Pinocchio' for house prices claim, says Duncan Smith.

Leading Brexit campaigner says voters should be wary of Treasury reports on which chancellor based property warnings Iain Duncan Smith has likened

George Osborne to Pinocchio for claiming that house prices could fall by up to 18% if the UK votes to leave the EU.

Some other examples from independent.co.uk come below:

All night the dread less Angel unpursu'd...

The example above is taken from Milton's 'Paradise Lost', in which 'dread less Angel' is allusion which is a reference to a fearless angel named 'Abdiel'.

The little cage of 'Curren Bell' / In quiet 'Haworth' laid.

The example above is taken from Emily Dickinson's poem 'All Overgrown by Cunning Moss', in which 'Curren Bell' is a direct reference to a writer named 'Charlotte Bronte'.

Where, sitting in a chariot burning bright...

The above sentence is taken from Marlowe's 'Doctor Faustus', in which 'Chariot burning bright' is referring to 'god Apollo'. According to a Greek myth, god Apollo drives the sun in his chariot.

Cancer's 'Achilles' heel' discovered by British scientists raising hope of 'cure'.

Findings mean each patient 'would have a unique, bespoke treatment' that marshals immune cells to exploit the weakness identified

NHS cyber attack result of 'one big mistake'.

Tottenham will 'take the soul' of White Hart Lane with them to new stadium says Mauricio Pochettino.

Intertextual figures are what make headlines more interesting and let media remain impartial. Quotation marks as well as close-to-native-Britons phrases help manipulate the minds of people.

From this point of view, headlines play an important role in conducting strategic communication with the audience. We came to such conclusion that gradual hints, wordplays and particular tone of voice make an impact on readers' perception about some topics, at least motivates them read the article and agree with its idea subconsciously.

Researchers state that uza.uz and jahonnews.uz use several metaphorical methods to form positive image of the country and positive impressions about Uzbekistan.

"Metaphores as well play a major role in attracting the attention of audience of Uzbekistani media", writes Diyora Atakhanova in her Master's Dissertation. "In headlines of news agencies metaphores, diversity of metaphoric models can be seen, which increase the expressiveness of headlines", stated in the thesis(5, 170). Model of way/road, model of nature, model of home/building were the examples the author counted with examples from local websites.

Uzbekistan’s English-language media that we observed – uzreport.uz/en and uzdaily.com – in most cases use official statements and news-release style for headlines, which is quite neutral and unbiased. Sport news headlines though uses sport metaphors that give them their attraction and close-to-native sense.

South Korea beats Uzbekistan. – 15 November 2016.

Denis Istomin climbs 37 positions up in new ATP rankings. – 30 January 2017.

Uzbekistan slips two places down in FIFA ranking. – 9 February 2017.

Generally, British media are more active in using different linguistic and stylistic figures, methods and manipulative techniques to communicate with their target audience in a more successful and productive way. Uzbekistan’s English-language media do not concentrate on headlines as instruments of strategic communication.

Structure and Grammar

Headlines on news media, according to our conclusions, tend to be longer and more detailed, as they must keep the whole gist of the story in themselves. Different linguistic and stylistic devices – alliterations, intertextuality, puns and others – are handy tools for delivering the deep-in-content message with one statement. There is another aspect of headline’s investigation concerning English-language media that is the grammar requirements and standards of writing headlines in English. *Cambridge English for the Media* highlights the grammar rules for writing headlines:

- Use present simple tense for past events
- Leave out auxiliary verbs
- Use infinitives for future events
- Leave out articles (a, an, the)
- Leave out “to be”
- Leave out “to say”
- Replace conjunctions with punctuation
- Use figures for numbers (1, 7).

Special grammatical templates created for the newspaper, later for online media have plenty of reasons behind their origin. One of those reasons is the attempt of news writers to keep statements as compact and precise as possible.

From the viewpoint of editing, media are required to follow certain style and rules. Particularly, standardization of headline texts, in the end, must contribute to the successful journalistic news feeding.

Our observations on Uzbekistan’s English-language media have shown that there are many English-language news websites with qualitative headlines, while some websites fail to provide consistency in their content in headline’s respect.

“The development of information sphere of Uzbekistan and gradual expansion of the activity of websites through their improvement with the spirit of national and spiritual values serve as the main factor in protecting the population from hostile and destructive ideas. Forming and strengthening ideological immunity of the Republic's citizens, especially youth, are carried out through creating materials, directed to cultivation of the feeling of love to the homeland and pride towards the achievements of the country.

In this respect, the activity of National news agency Uza, main source for information about reforms carried out all over Uzbekistan, is not an exception. In its turn, the activity of Jahon news agency is directed to the presentation of Uzbekistan’s achievements to the world community. In this connection, in the headlines on the websites of these news agencies, there is the lexicology with positive stylistic evaluation of stated events”(5, 170).

Uza and Jahon news agencies appeared to utilize old newspaper tradition in presenting a news story, according to which headlines come with some abstract and a picture. Here we give several examples:

Jahonnews.uz:

Services sector developing. — 13 April 2017.

Qualified personnel for the business sphere. — 19 April 2017.

More of Good and Diverse Projects. — 19 April 2017.

Uza.uz:

Medical services being improved. — 11 April 2017.

Gratitude for peaceful days. — 26 April 2017.

In an atmosphere of joy, peace and quiet. — 2 May 2017.

Another point that should be noted is that on both websites there are news lists or archives, where headlines appear without leads or abstracts, making the headlining lack informativeness. From grammatical angle, there are errors related to word-for-word translation, calque structures and templates in both media. For example, in some headlines writers use hyphen (dash) instead of “to be” under the influence of Uzbek or Russian language:

Ensuring stability of moral climate – important task. – Uza.uz, 13 April 2017.

Our Weightlifter Adkhamjon Ergashev – World Champion. – Jahonnews.uz, 26 October 2017.

Uzbekistan Today’s online version posts news more frequently and it aligns to international standards in terms of four factors mentioned above. Besides some

rare errors related to the headlining grammar and inconsistency of the style, ut.uz headlines news stories based on globally-recieved techniques. Our research showed that headlines on ut.uz tend to use different structures in headlines. By inconsistency, we mean the utility of varying formats and grammar structures in headlines, rather than having the certain style with recieved rules for headlines.

For example, **to tell about past events:**

some headlines use Present Perfect (*Rules for preferential admission to higher education institutions have been amended.* – 7 April 2017),

while other use Past Indefinite (*Mikhail Shvydkoy took part in the opening of the Russian Language Center in Tashkent.* – 29 March 2017)

or Present Simple (*Tashkent schoolgirl easily wins at famous international children's competitions.* – 10 April 2017).

There are “to be”s in some headlines of Passive Voice (*The work of 58 academic lyceums was considered unsatisfactory.* – 16 March 2017),

whereas “to be”s are skipped in some (*Talented students and active teachers given awards.* – 23 December 2017).

To tell about future events, some headlines are written with “will” (*Another center retraining job seekers will start working in the country.* – 23 March 2017), while other headlines address the international standard of “to+verb” formula (*246,4 Billion Soums to Be Allocated in 2017 for the Reconstruction and Overhaul of Colleges and Lyceums.* – 30 January 2017).

Some headlines come without predicate (verb):

The Military Technical Institute & the Institute of Fire Safety. – 11 April 2017;

Pre-school Standards – 10 March 2017;

Study via New Programs – 3 March 2017;

Speaking About Foreign – 13 February 2017;

Communicating, teaching, assessing the knowledge – 15 November 2016.

UzReport.uz and Uzdaily.com, privately-owned media covering news for foreign audience in English, have introduced international standards of newswriting, particularly headline writing. In both of them, headlines follow the universal conventions on writing headlines in English.

Uzdaily.com’s user-friendly interface with maximum amount of news presented on homepage, in the first place, gives an opportunity for viewing headlines. Headlines do represent the main gist of the article/news story/report. We consider that headlines on Uzdaily.com “sounds English”, meaning that they are close to the language that foreign audience got used to encounter on online media. It is the best headliner among English-language media, according to our six-

months research, despite some mistakes and inconsistencies in the headlines of this kind, for example: *President of Uzbekistan received Turkish FM, NOT President of Uzbekistan receives Turkish FM.* – 26 April 2017; *USCENTCOM chief pays visit to Uzbekistan, NOT USCENTCOM chief to pay visit to Uzbekistan.* – 25 April 2017.

It makes the communication more successful, creating convenience for the visitors. Considering the fact that *Uzbekistan Daily* is a relatively young news service in Uzbekistan, it has been doing sufficiently good job, archiving all important news in the life of Uzbekistan in English language on one online platform. It also uses abbreviations and short forms of some words to help headlines avoid being too long, making them compact and rich-in-content at the same time:

Russian Govn't approves draft agreement on cooperation with Uzbekistan in healthcare sector. – 6 April 2017

Int'l observers receives information on presidential elections. – 3 December 2016

Uzbek FM holds meeting with EU Special Representative for Central Asia. – 27 April 2017.

Enterprises of Uzvinprom-holding produce goods for 396.1bn soums in 1Q. – 1 May 2017.

Uzreport.uz is another good example of news “serving” for English-speaking audience, especially with its exclusive data on economics and other related spheres. Our research showed that editorial teams of governmental news agencies tend to show the least satisfactory results on international standards alignment in comparison to the private ones, despite private newsrooms have limited amount of staff operating on the basis of multitasking and convergence.

In conclusion, headlines in the Internet are seen not only summarizing statements or introductory lines about an event or news, but they are, as viewed more than the article's text, considered to be builders of public opinion or impressions about some topics. The use of intertextuality, word plays and allusion as well as metaphors in British online media show that such methods can help attract the attention of the audience at the same time making readers agree or support the idea, as idiomatical and metaphorical expressions are close to their mentality. Uzbekistan's online media tend to use different metaphors for “development news”, while *Uzdaily.com* utilize sport metaphors in sport news headlines, which increase the role of headlines as tools of successful, intimate and productive communication.

Looking at how Uzbekistan’s English-language media headline the articles, one can say that conventions developed through many years’ experience of foreign media, including British ones, standards of writing headlines are, to some point, ignored in some media. Meanwhile, Uzdaily.com, an object of our research appeared to follow all grammatical and generic rules of headlining as well as another privately-owned uzreport.uz website.

Furthermore, linguistic analysis of headlines of British online media showed that striving for having compact and informative headlines for articles resulted into craftsmen of specific-verb-form, article-free and auxiliary-verb-free structures. In addition, the presentation of news through headlines actively involves graphic support, pictures, sub-headlines, bullet points and tags in order to let visitors immerse to the stories being told under these headlines.

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