

## Exploring the Language Use in Selected the Sun iPaper Headlines (Online Newspaper)

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### ABSTRACT

Mass media plays a vital role in people's lives. Newspapers are a type of media that can attract people through language use. A variety of printed as well as online newspapers are easily available to attract readers. Nevertheless, in English newspapers, learners of English (ESL) found it confusing to understand news headlines due to its language use. Thus, this study aimed at examining the language use of selected newspaper headlines focusing on its lexical features and functional types. The data for this present study comprises of nine headlines of the Sun iPaper collected for Monday issue for two months (January and February 2024) serve as convenience sampling. This study employed quantitative and qualitative research approach whereby the analysis of lexical features used was drawn from the Tense System in Headlines Analysis by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985) and Mardh's model – Typical Linguistic Features of Newspaper Headlines (1980) was used in analysing the functional types of news headlines. The findings suggested that the usage of noun and statement outnumbered other forms of lexical items and functional types of the selected newspaper headlines of the Sun iPaper (online newspaper). The findings of the study may contribute to the existing knowledge in lexical features, stylistics and language as well as media because understanding of news headlines can be useful and beneficial in helping ESL students in their classroom context.

**Keywords:** Functional Types, Language use, Lexical Features, Newspaper Headlines

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Mass media plays a vital role in people's lives these days in line with the advancement of world wide web. Media particularly newspapers use words as tools or weapons to attract readers. A variety of printed as well as online newspapers are available which are convenient to all ages. In newspaper, headline is an important element to attract readers (Sherpa, 2012). According to Longman Dictionary online, headline refers to the title of a newspaper report, which is printed in large letters above the report. Headlines have become an interest of many linguists due to its distinct features and characteristics (Bell, 1991). This is supported by Reah (1998) as news headlines are produced in a different language which refer to 'block language' and have their own grammatical pattern and vocabulary, which may differ from common language. Hence, she also claimed that headline language has its own features in terms of syntactic, rhetorical levels and lexical choices that might provide conciseness, clarity and attractiveness messages towards intended readers. For ESL learners who are less proficient, poor written headlines could lead to ambiguity and misinterpretation compared to well written headlines which may give a clearer picture of the story or message in the news. Omission of certain lexical items in the newspaper headlines might affect the interpretation and understanding of the said ESL learners when they read the English newspaper headlines.

Moreover, there are several variations of types of headlines in 'newspaper language' register, i.e. statement, command, question and exclamation (McLoughlin, 2000; Van Dijk, 1988). Another variation falls in terms of the lexical items used to convey meanings such as noun, verb, adjective, and so on. However, these variations may differ depending on the types of newspapers. Van Dijk (1988) added that headlines are particularly significant for audience to comprehend headlines as they serve as markers that monitor intended readers' attention, perception and understanding of the news. Mardh (1980) who conducted a study on the distinct features of English newspapers headlines concluded that the omission of articles, verbs and subjects, the frequent use of complex noun and noun phrases are usually associate with the newspaper headlines.

## **1.1 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

Studies on linguistics aspects in mass media communication have evolved over years. The distinct features of 'newspapers language' register have attracted many linguists to conduct studies to examine the news headlines focusing on its stylistics, grammatical, structural and so on. Furthermore, newspaper readers especially English language learners (ESL) might have difficulty to understand newspaper headlines not only in the lexical features use but the complexity of syntactical, structural, omission of words as well as rhetorical styles of the newspaper headlines also contribute to the matter. Therefore, there is a need to conduct more studies in this area as to provide more insights into the language use in selected English newspaper headlines. Aside from that, Mardh (1980) who conducted a study on semantic analysis identified some linguistic features of newspaper headlines such as the frequent use of noun and adverbs in headlines. This is supported by Khodabandeh (2019) who conducted a study on contrastive analysis of the English and Persian newspaper headlines found out that there was a dominant use of nouns which has outnumbered other part of speech in both news headlines. On the other hand, in terms of functional headline, the use of statements or declarative sentence was the most frequent as compared to any other types of function such as question, command and exclamation. Similarly, in a study conducted by Oxunjon and Sulaymonova (2021) focusing on the characteristics of headlines in newspaper suggested that the way news headlines are written usually in a sensational way and make use of a few words only to make them more economical. Their findings also concluded that these features are usually associated with English newspaper headlines which include the omission of articles and verbs, frequent use of nouns and short words. Thus, with the distinct features mentioned in the headlines created would give impact in tackling readers especially the ESL learners.

## **1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The objective in the present study was to examine the use of language in selected newspaper headlines specifically focusing on its lexical features and functional types in the Sun iPaper (online newspaper).

## 2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

Printed or online newspaper contains news, stories or information about any events that happen locally or around the globe. Through online newspapers, readers can know what is happening around them with just a single click of their mobile phones or laptops. The language used in newspaper headlines acts as tools that may attract readers to read through the whole news in the newspapers. Several studies have been conducted in analyzing news headlines. Tiono (2003) stated that linguists are interested in studying the newspaper language due to the way headlines are presented or written may have power to attract readers. Reporters or journalists would use lexical items, expressions or styles that may have power in influencing readers to read the whole news instead of just browsing it. Thus, the stylistics features and language use in headlines might have different impacts depending on how intended readers perceive it. In another study conducted by Mozuraityte in analyzing the stylistic features of the headlines, suggested that the use of omission, short words, loaded words and nominalization as well as noun phrases are found in the *Telegraph* headlines (2015).

Moreover, Abdullayeva in her study on specific language of newspapers style focusing on headlines concluded that headlines usually associate with short words and be written in concise, brief and precise language as intended readers for newspapers are targeting a broad audience (2021). Similar findings could be obtained from Bonyadi and Samuel (2013) who conducted a contrastive study on headlines in newspapers Editorials between the *New York Times* (*NYT*) and *Tehran Times* (*TT*). Their findings suggested that the *NYT* would use short punchy headlines compared to *TT* which would rather use longer sentences which made the headlines less catchy and interesting.

Nonetheless, Wannakan (2022) who carried out a study to analyze the grammatical and lexical features of news headlines in English language newspaper, found out that both printed and online newspaper mainly used simple sentence and simple tense structure in constructing the intended headlines. The results also indicated that short words i.e. abbreviations, acronyms and clipping were being used in those headlines. Meanwhile, in another study done by Khodabandeh, focusing on contrastive analysis between Persian and English Newspaper Headlines. The findings for 1 week data suggested that both headlines were similar in using verbs, short words and statement or declarative sentences. However, different results were shown in other features like the tense forms, types of headlines and omission of words (2019).

## 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study uses quantitative and qualitative approach in analyzing the selected newspaper headlines. This study aimed at examining the language use of selected news headlines in the local newspaper – the Sun iPaper (online newspaper) specifically focusing on its lexical features and functional types used for Monday issue for two months. The analysis of lexical features used was drawn from the Tense System in Headlines Analysis by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985) meanwhile the Mardh's model – Typical Linguistic Features of Newspaper Headlines (1980) was used in analyzing the functional types of news headlines.

### 3.2 SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

Sample of the data was gathered from the Sun iPaper (online newspaper). This study employed convenient sampling of the Sun iPaper headlines for January and February 2024, for Monday issue. A total of nine news headlines was chosen depending on the availability of the sampling. As this study aimed at analyzing the language use in selected newspaper headlines of the Sun iPaper (online newspaper) focusing on the lexical features and functional types used the headlines, the identification and selection of the newspaper headlines were first carried out. The Sun iPaper headlines were conveniently chosen for Monday issue for two months (January and February 2024) based on the availability of the samples. Then the selected headlines were tabulated into table. The analysis of the headlines began with the classification of the lexical items according to its category (noun, verb, adjective, preposition, determiner, pronoun and adverb) by using grammatical framework proposed by Quirk et al. (1985). Analysis of the structure of headlines was also carried out. Lastly, with the analysis of the functional types of the selected headlines was carried out using Mardh's model (1980).

### 4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: The distribution of lexical items in the Sun iPaper newspaper headlines**

Category	No of words	Lexical items						
		N	V	Adj.	Conj.	Prep	Det	I
HL1	5	3			1			
HL2	4	2				1		1
HL3	3			2	1			
HL4	2		1	1				
HL5	3	2	1					
HL6	4	2		1				
HL7	3	3	1					
HL8	3		2		1			
HL9	3	2					1	
		14	5	4	3	1	1	1

As shown in Table 1, in general the number of words used in selected newspaper headlines of the Sun iPaper is ranging between two to five words. For example, HL4 [*Be vigilant*] consists of only two words the shortest headline, meanwhile HL3 [*Overworked and underpaid*], HL8 [*Sell or swap*] and HL9 [*Pressure on wallet*] each of them consists of three words. 'No' to RM 30,000 fine (HL2) and Net zero emission achievable (HL6) have four words each and HL1 [*Death knell for 'Ali Baba' businesses*] has the highest number of words, five words. The total number of words used in the selected of news headlines is 30. Based on the results, it shows that the selected newspaper headlines of the Sun iPaper are written in a few words, but they reflect the key message of what is the news is all about.

Based on Table 1, the result also showed that, noun was frequently used in the selected newspaper headlines of the Sun iPaper with 14 words, followed by verb with five words, then adjective with four words and conjunction with three words respectively. For the remaining lexical items, there was only one word for each lexical category i.e. preposition, determiner

and infinite. Overall view, it can be said that the selected headlines of the Sun iPaper (online newspaper) for Monday issue for January and February 2024 have highly in favour for nouns. Noun category has outnumbered other lexical items categories in creating those selected newspaper headlines.

Based on the findings in Table 1, the selected headlines for Monday issue of the Sun iPaper (online newspaper) in general are constructed using short number of words ranging between two to five words. These findings of this research are consistent with the findings of Abdullayeva (2021), Oxunjon and Sulaymonova (2021) and Bonyadi and Samuel (2013), which suggested that headlines are usually written in brief and concise manner with a short number of words. Short number of words in the headlines would make them look catchier and appealing to the intended readers.

As mentioned in the related review of literature, news headlines are in favour of using noun compared to other lexical items category. Based on Table 1, the selected newspaper headlines for Monday issue of the Sun iPaper (online newspaper) would use nouns more than other lexical items category. The findings agree with Oxunjon's et al. (2021), Khodabandeh's (2019) and Mozuraityte's (2015) findings which showed noun category is the frequent lexical item to be used in newspaper headlines regardless which types of newspapers.

**Table 2: Distribution of functional types of the Sun iPaper newspaper headlines**

Functional Types	Number of headlines
Statement	6
Command	2
Question	1
Exclamation	0
Total	9

Based on the Table 2, the findings indicated that the functional types used in selected news headlines of the Sun iPaper are generally in form of statements. From a total of nine headlines, six were written in statement or declarative form, one was using question and the remaining two were using command based on the functional types of the newspaper headlines. Statement or declarative type refers to headline that interprets actions, belief, state of affairs and feelings. HL1 (*Death knell for 'Ali Baba' businesses*), HL3 (*Overworked and underpaid*) and HL9 (*Pressure on wallet*) are the examples of headlines that were constructed in form of statement. On the other hand, a command headline may describe an advice or request whereas a question headline is addressed to an audience and asked for an opinion, expression of fact and belief. HL2 (*'No' to RM 30,000 fine*) and HL4 (*Be vigilant*) respectively were written in using command as for functional types. For the question type, only HL8 (*Sell or swap*) was constructed using the said type. Amongst the collected data, none of the sampling is written using exclamation form. It can be said that the Sun iPaper (online newspaper) for Monday issue for these two months generally use statement form in delivering and constructing the headlines to reach readers. The other types are rarely found in the newspaper headlines for Monday issue in the said months.

As stated earlier, newspaper headlines can be segmented into four functional types: statements, questions, commands and exclamations (Van Dijk, 1988 and McLoughlin, 2000). The above findings seemed to support the previous findings of related studies. It could be concluded that, the Sun iPaper for Monday issue in January and February 2024 would use statement form in constructing the news headlines. Similar results could be found in the study conducted by Khodabandeh (2019).

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**HL2 ([omission V] 'No' to RM 30,000 fine**

**HL5 (TMJ [omission 'to be' verb] appointed [omission prep] [article] Regent of Johor)**

**HL7 (Mum-daughter duo hailed [omission N])**

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The results of study also indicated that the omission of lexical category (words) was also shown in the selected newspaper headlines of the Sun iPaper for Monday issue in January and February 2024. In HL2 (*'No' to RM30,000 fine*) was written with the omission of verb. The headline was written using command type thus even though with the omission of verb, it did not affect the news headline. Following that, for HL5, the omission of 'to be' verb, preposition and article also appeared in statement type of headline. Similarly, for HL7, another statement type of headline (*Mum-daughter duo hailed*) was written with the omission of noun. Amongst the selected headlines, the used of acronyms was also found. Based on the results, one only acronym was found in HL5 (*TMJ* – a short form of Tengku Mahkota Johor).

The present findings of omission lexical (word) categories seem to be consistent with other research findings done by Wannakan (2022) and Khodabandeh (2019). The omission of words does not limit to noun category only, but also appear in another lexical item categories. Based on the results, one's may conclude that the omission of lexical items does not affect the intended meaning of the headlines. However, in terms of abbreviations, only 1 acronym was found in the sampling. It could be said that the Sun iPaper for Monday issue in January and February 2024 might focus on other lexical item categories in constructing of the headlines.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the results and findings, it can be concluded that the selected newspapers headlines of the Sun iPaper for Monday issue that were conveniently chosen for 2 months (January and February 2024) would use statement form in constructing of the headlines compared to other forms of functional types. The findings also show that most headlines would use noun to represent the whole event. It could be said that lexical items use in the selected news headlines might have the 'essence' that could represent the whole news or intended event of the selected news. By constructing the headlines using those lexical items chosen, the said headlines might attract and influence the intended readers to start reading the news as they can browse it in online platform. Hence, the short number of words use in the newspaper headlines serve the purpose of attracting intended readers to read the news. The presence of omission of lexical items could also be found in the results. Based on the findings, the omissions of those lexical items do not hinder the meanings for the selected headlines towards readers. However, it might create a little confusion for certain ESL learners who are less proficient as language use in

English newspaper headlines might be different from the common language use in other platforms due to the usage of omission.

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## 7.0 APPENDIX

Item	NEWSPAPER (DATE)	HEADLINES
HL1	1 January 2024	Death knell for 'Ali Baba' businesses
HL2	8 January 2024	No' to RM 30,000 fine
HL3	15 January 2024	Overworked and underpaid
HL4	22 January 2024	Be vigilant
HL5	29 January 2024	TMJ appointed Regent of Johor
HL6	5 February 2024	Net zero emission achievable
HL7	12 February 2024	Mum-daughter duo hailed
HL8	19 February 2024	Sell or swap
HL9	26 February 2024	Pressure on wallet