

# LINGUISTIC MEANS FOR REALIZATION AND EVALUATION OF THE MESSAGE IN NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

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## **Abstract**

The article investigates functions of the language and analyses how evaluation is maintained in newspaper headlines. Language gathers its own emotional and cultural elements that depend on sub-cultures in which the language exists. Written text has a graphological level, and all texts have a lexical level and structural level. Evaluation concerns evaluative vocabulary. "Good-bad" denotes the qualitative evaluation of facts, "true-false" reflects this parameter and evaluates facts, events, and people from the point of view of conformity with the commonly accepted norm.

**Key words:** language operator, naming, stereotypes, ironic nuances, animalistic metaphor.

Nowadays political life is becoming a more and more urgent issue on the background of ever-increasing European and transatlantic ties. Hence the analysis of the role and means of mass media reflecting these issues is very topical and urgent.

**The aim** of the article is to analyze linguistic means that help people to realize and evaluate the message communicated in news and newspaper headlines. The object of the research is news and newspaper headlines and texts.

In terms of linguistics the categories of written mass media are mostly analyzed in the frames of newspaper material. It is connected with development of human activities that need to be adequately transferred into speech and help people either to communicate with each other, or to inform about these activities, influencing and evaluating behavior and attitude to facts on the one hand and moral codes on the other.

Another important aspect of the research is the analysis of evaluation means. A pragmatic function in newspapers is carried out mainly by the parameters of evaluation. For this reason politicians and journalists use speech regulatory means in order to influence people's behavior or change their attitudes.

The factual material for the research has been taken from English, American and Lithuanian newspapers and consists of newspaper and news headlines and quotations from speeches of politicians on various questions.

This research is based on analytical and descriptive **methods**.

The headline is a unique type of text. It functions due to regulations which limit the freedom of the writer. However the headline is usually written not by the reporter who wrote the news story, but by the writers who are in charge of this very important job. The key functions of a headline are to attract the reader's attention and, certainly, to persuade the reader to buy the newspaper. The headline has the capacity to represent a story, and to give the reader the overall picture of the current news. The reader can skim the headlines and have a general impression of the news of the day.

The principle function of newspaper style is a pragmatic function, or, as some linguists call it, a persuasive function. It is aimed at channelling the reader's opinion with the purpose to change the readers' attitude or behaviour. This is usually done not through logical argumentation, but through emotionally charged statements and choice of language means that are the most appropriate for the purpose.

Generally, newspaper style is characterised by two aspects: expressiveness that is revealed through evaluation (or appraisal) aspect and author's individual attitude.

While giving appraisals, newspapers use different items of lexicon, colloquialisms, archaisms, neologisms, special terms, etc. According to A. Zubov (1977, 7), there are several ways of appraising: 1) evaluation-intellectual or emotional; 2) realization-explicit or implicit; 3) language means used for realization-lexical, syntactical, graphic and stylistic means. He gives examples that illustrate his point of view when he speaks about intellectual and emotional evaluation: *I find this course of action definitely inappropriate; to embark on this course would be a sheer stupidity.*

In the first sentence the evaluation appeals to rational perception of the audience, while in the second it is expressed through emotional means of language. Explicit and implicit character of evaluation helps in determining the location of the objects on the good/bad scale. Explicit evaluation usually contains emotional words or word combinations and expressive vocabulary. Implicit evaluation may contain no evaluative words. E.g., the sentence *I live in the centre of the city* may have either positive or negative evaluation depending on the situation. It is positive, if one understands it as “there are lots of places of entertainment in the centre” and negative if it is understood as “it is very dusty and noisy”.

According to L. Kiseleva (1978), the implicit evaluation depends on the “quality” of printed mass media and the genre. Although opinion of an author in the majority of cases is the opinion of the newspaper or magazine and depends on the rank of a newspaper, the opinion of state bodies, social institutions, or political parties, on all occasions the author applies something personal to his work. This is usually expressed by the choice of one or another form of evaluation and especially by the language means for expressing evaluation.

Another important issue concerning evaluation in newspaper style is wide usage of quotations. By using a direct quotation without any remarks, the author seemingly does not express any evaluation. The second way of quoting is to include only part of an actual utterance. This way of evaluation is the most spread within newspaper-publicist style as it is the most expedient. The third method is the absence of quotation, only reported speech is present. Words of an original speaker can be interpreted by the author of the article from his point of view (Robinson, 2003).

By using quotations, the author of the article rejects his own responsibility for expressiveness and evaluation. The feel of the author seemingly depends on the quality of newspapers. In “mass newspapers” and tabloids the author speaks more openly, expressing his own point of view.

While discussing speech regulatory theory the other factors should be taken into account; such as specific features of newspaper vocabulary and grammar. First of all, writers tend to substitute a single verb by a common expression, which adds smoothness to the text. For example, these phrases are: “make contact with”, “serve purpose”, “play a leading role”, etc. Besides, gerunds are usually not preferable in the publicist text. They are substituted by abstract nouns or verbal noun with prepositions. Such set phrases as ‘with respect to’, ‘in view of’, and ‘having regard to’, have already become newspaper clichés.

The choice of grammar structures also depends on the fact that newspaper text is not a colloquial text and the sentences are more complex and the use of the passive voice is very frequent, which helps the writer to depersonalize the presentation of facts and events.

Writers of fiction have often discussed the role of language in the forming and maintaining of social structures and roles. George Orwell (1984), in his book *Nineteenth Eighty-Four*, described a society in which the ruling powers tried to maintain almost total control over the population. “A weapon in this control was the language Newspeak, which contained no way of expressing concepts and ideologies that were opposed to the state.” (Reah, 2002, 53) Let us investigate these functions of the language and start with linguistic “operators”.

Language is a very powerful tool. In any medium language gathers its own emotional and cultural elements. And what these elements are will depend on sub-cultures in which the language exists. According to Danuta Reah (ibid), language operates at a series of levels. Written text has a visual or graphological level. Spoken text has an aural or phonological level. And, certainly, all texts have a word or lexical level, as well as a structural and grammatical or syntactic level.

However it is very important to admit that texts operate within a cultural context and they operate within the value system of that culture. The next step is to analyse some of these “operators”.

The first operator is naming. Naming is an aspect of language connected with social rules and difficulties. In most cultures, it is possible to cause offence by adopting the wrong naming strategy towards people. For example, in France the use of *tu* and *vous* can cause certain offence to an English speaker, using them as though they were equal to the English address.

In naming, context and relationship operate together to create a complex series of meanings.

For instance, the use of ‘boy’ or ‘girl’ implies an adult to child relationship, and, when used by one adult to another, can be very offensive.

The use of nicknames indicates friendship. All the system of naming can be used to create very specific effects. The importance of naming may be seen in the black communities, where the term ‘Negro’, was firmly rejected by the community and certain substitutes were used such as ‘Afro- Caribbean’, or ‘Afro- American’. Naming in social groups becomes less important when a group achieves equal status not just in the law, but in reality.

The other linguistic functions should be mentioned are **attributes, roles and qualities**. As Danuta Reah (ibid) points out, the naming strategies have a direct effect on the ideological position of the text. Word choice is the way in which groups are described. Description is part of the naming strategy. For instance, to call someone a 'man' or a 'boy' or a 'Brit' is descriptive.

Description may also be added by modification in the noun phrase, and by the use of adjectives.

In the article "Salute from the Poms?" the Aboriginals are described as "treacherous and brutal". (The Sun Editorial, 1988) The qualities 'gentle' and 'trusting' are introduced as being falsely attributed to them by others. The descriptions in the naming compare the Aboriginals to 'children' and the Englishmen to 'Ancient Brits who painted themselves blue'. These descriptions introduce the savage- a sub- human species; or the noble savage- a sub-human species with a child-like innocence. Certainly, both of these representations are caricatures.

Closely linked to naming are the attributes and qualities by which groups or individual members of groups are prescribed when they are discussed in newspaper texts. Due to the fact that newspapers support the dominant cultural norm, the attitudes of the dominant culture tend to be reflected in the language of news stories, in particular when they concern the minority groups. For example, "the use of belittling, demeaning or derogatory terms towards disadvantaged groups can help to promote the belief that the group itself is to blame for its disadvantage". (Reah, 2002, 73)

Certainly, very few people would agree with these statements, but many would read this news without challenging them, because the views are not expressed overtly, but cancelled in the word choice.

Newspaper stories suggest that certain stereotypes are used in the press in relation to sex. There is a tendency to depict them as existing in relation to their families rather than as individuals. Women are often introduced as weaker persons, so generally images of women correspond to a very limited stereotype that values them in a very narrow set of roles.

**Action verbs** are another means of language to form social structures. The order of elements in a clause can give weighting to some aspects, and reduce, or remove others. The relationship between the elements has a fundamental role.

Let us start from the verbs which occupy a major role in newspapers message.

According to the verb system, introduced by Hodge and Kress (1993), the verbs can be divided into two kinds, those that refer to actions are actionals, and those that refer to relations are called relationals. Actional verbs can be divided into those that have an agent or actor who causes the action, and someone or something that is affected by the action. These verbs are called transactives. The other actional verbs, for example, 'went' involve only the actor. Verbs like this are called non-transactives. Transactive: *Alice installed the washer*. Non-transactive: *She looks for the spanner*. Relational verbs can represent the relationship, a quality or attribute, or indicate an equal state between two nouns. (Dixon, 2010, 370) For ex.: "The ex-supermodel weighs ten stone. Madonna is a mum!" "Word obese is too offensive". Quality or attribute: "*That dog is vicious*". Equal state: "David is my brother". (The Sun, 2010; The Independent 2010).

*The Sun* and *the Independent* both use actional verbs in the article about Ms Allwood as the actor (The Independent, 14 October, 2009). (She 'conceived' the pregnancy, she 'asked' for help, 'took' her prescription to the chemist, 'did not have to pay' etc. Where these verbs are transactive, the affected relate to the children she hopes to have and the drugs she obtains. The general impression is that someone is operating independently. The involvement of the father of the children is minimised, introducing him in the subordinate clause that links Ms Allwood with the quality of desperation, expressed by a relational verb:

'Mandy, 31, [relational verb] was [quality attributed to Ms Allwood] so desperate to have a family by lover Paul Hudson...'

"The Independent" focuses on the financial aspects of the sale of the story. It carries the implication that the point of the pregnancy is to make money. The same article also comprised relational verbs. However, this newspaper highlighted the positive sides of the Mandy's family, describing them with relational verbs: 'They are appalled and shocked', 'heartbroken'. Here attention was concentrated on their qualities and attributes. In contrast with her parents, Mandy Allwood is shown as someone who takes actions that affect the world around her, and does it in a negative way.

In this article Ms Allwood herself appeared as the subject of a transactive verb: 'she caused...so much hurt', she 'dumped husband'. Both articles cover the same issues, but they affect the reader's attitude differently, because of diversity of actional and relational verbs.

The choice of a transactive structure can focus the readers' attention on the actor, and present a specific group. In the example above, Ms Allwood occupies the subject position in the clause. That places particular emphasis on her participation.

However, a different effect is created if the actor is placed in a less prominent position in the clause or even removed i.e. used **the deleting techniques**.

In English it is possible to rearrange transitive clauses so that the direct transitive object of a verb becomes the grammatical subject. For instance,

(subject)	(verb)	(agent phrase)
1. The dog	bit	the postman
2. The postman	was bitten	by the dog
(subject)	(verb)	(agent phrase)

The transformation is performed introducing the passive structure. By using a passive structure, newspapers are able to focus on the fact itself. In various complicated cases, by deleting the actor, the paper is able to imply illegal conduct without making an accusation that could cause them certain legal action (Widdowson, 2009).

The story covering discussion about Mandy Allwood contains certain attributes of emotions, such as desperation or anger. They were introduced to the reader through relational verbs: 'Mandy was desperate'. However sometimes writers can reveal a quality or attribute in the modifier of a noun phrase. For example, "Terry not sorry for Milner challenge", "Peace process 'rock solid' despite bomb attack"(The Independent, 12 April 2010), "Poland in national mourning" (The Guardian, 12 April 2010).

By removing the relational verb, the writer can influence the opinion and ideological thinking of the reader. The text without a verb appears to refer to an accepted state of affairs, while the text with a verb offers an opinion that is open for discussion.

One of the ways to create a particular emphasis or focus is to use **the passive structures**, which bring to the front of the sentence something that would not otherwise have been there. The unmarked or expected order of clause elements is subject, verb, object, complement and adjunct on adverbial (Reah, 2002, 96).

We shall take a closer look at the newspaper headlines paying attention to different kinds of emphasis, produced employing various clause elements. Generally the theme of a clause (its topic or most emphasized element) is the first complete word unit.

1. The use of imperatives puts the verb to the front. This article opens on the emotive word "win". "Grab a World Cup Wag Bag" (The Sun, 12 April 2010), this one even breaches the grammatical rules "Want young people in politics?" (The Times, 10 April 2010), "Plan to end 'gold digger' divorces" (The Times, 12 April 2010).

2. Questions have an auxiliary verb or a wh- word. That makes the reader start to ask the question before he or she knows what is being asked. "How is your Bank serving you?" (The Financial Times, 2009), "Why are we paying so much for water?" (The Times, 12 April 2010)

3. Adverbial elements of the clause generally appear at the end of the clause in its expected or unmarked position. However, in some headlines the adverbial clause, or adverbial complement appears first: "Behind the grieving faces is a thriving nation", "On the bottle: Women can order wine too" (The Times, 12 April, 2010). "With a flick of their pens the world became a more peaceful place" (The Independent, 12 April 2010).

This fronting of the adjunct has the effect of emphasizing the message contained in it. When an adverbial modifies a verb, it changes the meaning of that verb. There are many choices that a writer can make at the level of syntax. They can evoke different responses in the reader.

The next step is to investigate how evaluation is maintained in newspaper and political speech headlines. First of all, evaluation concerns evaluative vocabulary. Several parameters of evaluative words can be used.

The first of these parameters, "good-bad", denotes the qualitative evaluation of facts. It is characteristic to a human nature to judge things as good or bad; the words included in this parameter show the attitude of speaker and his personal feelings towards facts or people.

However, there is a big difference between evaluation presented by a certain person and evaluation given by a political leader. A president or a prime minister has to be very cautious while expressing his/her attitude. As the research showed the majority of the evaluative words are in the "bad" side of the scale. It can be explained by the following: before persuading the audience that everything that is done is good, a political leader has somehow to blame the opponents and their policy, and only after that he can present his own view on the issue, achieving his purpose of regulating and influencing people. The headline goes: "The worst thing that could happen is if terrorists acquire and then use a biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons that inflict heavy casualties" (The Independent on Sunday, 2003).

Afterwards the indirect appeal to the citizens follows in the article, which is particularly noticeable in the adjective “loyal” and adverb “truthfully”: “Both Britain and the US have truthfully warned their loyal citizens of further attacks in Turkey, and are both advising against nonessential travel there” (ibid).

Then the evaluative words with the meaning “good” follow on, which describe the intended policy. “The Bush government is doing everything in its power to stop catastrophic attacks and to restore peace”. (ibid)

The second parameter is true-false. Words that reflect this parameter evaluate facts, events, and people from the point of view of conformity with the commonly accepted norm. If there is conformity to the norm, then the statements are true; in the absence of conformity everything that is related to these parts is false.

Under a “commonly accepted norm” politicians usually mean their own attitude to facts. However, their objective is to turn this attitude into a “commonly accepted norm”, to make people believe that political declarations express people’s will and people’s thoughts. This objective is hard to achieve, and probably that is the reason why political leaders do not use “true- false” words too often.

One of the characteristic features of these words is that they are usually used in combination with words that strengthen their meaning, which is almost always explicit. The news headline says: “Blair says that last night’s attack on the Serbian state television headquarters was “entirely justified””. (The Guardian, April 23, 1999)

One of the ways of disclosing **intellectual evaluation** is the use of word- formation means. In the examples of political speeches under investigation the characteristic feature for all the evaluative words is a negative prefix or suffix.

It is not necessarily to defend one’s own policy with “positive” words, it may be enough to describe the opponent’s policy with “negative” words, and thus, implying that everything the opponent is doing is bad. Such words are quite frequent in Bush and Blair’s speeches. The news headline announces: “Saddam Hussein and his family, was a merciless tyranny that brutalized the country over many decades” (Blair, 2004)

However, this particular speech comprises the positive words, when talking about own nation. “Our task is to take this state and turn it into a democracy, stable and prosperous.” “Freedom is the answer to hopelessness and terror; that a free Iraq will lead the way to a new and better Middle East” (Bush, 2004). “Britain defends position on Falkland Islands” (The Independent, 12 April 2010).

Another way of introducing evaluation is the use of **stereotypes**. Stereotype fills a certain niche in individual’s “picture of the world”, that is why it can easily be decoded. Political leaders and editorial writers have special liking for stereotypes as the use of them can help to strengthen their personal position with positive stereotypes and weaken the opponent’s position with negative stereotypes. Thus for instance, in “Curing the Political Disease of Terrorism” the president of the USA says: “To subordinate every ambition of the American people to combating the disease of terrorism, with no end in sight, would be to hand Osama bin Laden a victory of the first magnitude.” (Bush, The Financial Times, 2003), “Hopes that US President Barack Obama would breathe new life into a peace process with Israel have ‘evaporated’” (The Independent, 2009).

**The metaphor** is another important tool of giving evaluation. To be understood, the metaphor should be transparent; i.e. the object chosen for the second part of the comparison should be well known. For example, when a person is described as an early bird, it is clear that this person gets up early and starts working hard. The pragmatic effect of this sort of metaphors is very strong. For example, “Sir Winston Churchill: The British Bulldog” (The Guardian, 2008). The author, Jim Osborn, describing Churchill as a bulldog, most probably wanted to praise him for the exploits in South Africa that earned him a hero’s status and set up his eventual entry as a Lord in the House of Commons with a seat with the Liberal Part.

Political leaders like using metaphors when they describe their opponents. Then they are usually given the names of animals or birds that are known for some negative qualities. For example “...hawkish critics”, “President’s Hawkish Critics Say U.S. Should Be Aligned with Reformists in Iran” (The Washington Independent, 2009).

It is known that **phrasal verbs** are used instead of simple verbs with the purpose of varying the means of speech and colouring the language. People like when politicians put themselves closer to their audience. This may be achieved by using colloquialisms in speech. Thus, the audience might have greater confidence in the person who, being one of them at least at the speaking level, represents their interests. “Hillary Clinton’s advisers too gung-ho on Iraq war” (The Daily News 2007). Speeches of politicians and other prominent public characters are filled with phrasal verbs. In Blair’s speeches most of phrasal combinations can be found. He creates expressive and colourful images, which are very colloquial and easily understood by the

readers. Thus, for instance, “Well, I don’t – I haven’t come across those particular words...” (Blair, 2004)

**Irony** is a difficult phenomenon to define due to the variety of its forms. It may be assumed that irony is the concurrent use of language to express a surface meaning and a different, usually intended, underlying meaning.

What matters in mass media is the audience’s recognition and appreciation of the usually sharp contrast between what was said and what was actually meant, regardless of how the two meanings relate to each other. Rhetorical irony can be quite sophisticated, but in ordinary conversations it might be in its simplest forms.

Every politically tensed situation tends to initiate the usage of ironic devices in language.

Several reasons could be found for that. First, irony is one of the ways to reveal person’s intellectual priority. The politicians try to manipulate the opinions of the audience and irony serves as the means to establish one’s priority and weaken the intellectual abilities of the opponents.

A perfect example of the wide usage of irony could be the political speeches of the ex-president of Lithuania. The ex-president needed to prove his strength and that was achieved employing irony. When accused of financial machinations the President undermined the seriousness of the opponents by declaring: “I dissociate myself from their money and from all the other treasures of the Captain Nemo”- in this way trying to stress the triviality of the accusations (Sekunde.lt 28 February, 2005).

Second, irony serves as the perfect means to find shelter from the complicated and threatening situation. The following situations will illustrate what has been stated above; during President’s meetings with local people all around Lithuania he was usually asked a lot of questions, like: “Mr. President, who is standing behind you?” The President turns around, and having found nobody behind answers very seriously “Nobody. Don’t you see?” (The Baltic Times. March 25-31, 2004). That is a perfect example of pretended surprise. President must have understood the implicated information. However, he uses the linguistic tactic of ignorance or surprise. It serves two purposes: 1) it blocks the way for the ironist to proceed with the same question as the interviewer himself might become the victim of the irony, and 2) the President is favoured by his supporters for finding such an escape. However, the quality level of his irony was too low and thus inappropriate.

Quite a different strategy was used by the President’s opponents. They also used irony as one of the main weapons in their language. However, it was performed on a different level.

Television also transmitted the interviews with Mr. Paksas. When the President was asked on what basis Mr. Borisov was given the citizenship of Lithuania- Mr. Paksas answered: “I don’t remember”. The answer was literal, however when he was re- echoed by the news program it became ironic. With the time politicians do not want to risk their reputation pretending having not understood the intended irony. Everyone tries to occupy a higher position in irony reconstruction. Irony is an aggressively intellectual exercise and it has to be used and treated not only as simple play on words or pun. For example: The newspaper headline “The Princess and the Pee” contains not only play on words “pee” and “pea”, but also discloses the sarcasm in the new headline “PRINCESS Beatrice has revealed she will have to go SIX HOURS without a Royal wee when she runs the London Marathon” (The Sun, 2010). “Bin Laden & Blair: Just when you had ‘em taped, they flip” (The Independent, 2010). Here irony serves as the perfect means to critical comments. The use of irony introduces an element of humour which makes the criticism more polite and less aggressive, but understanding of the speaker’s intentions requires second-order interpretation.

### **Conclusions**

The media continue to play their historical role of exposing corruption and venality, on the one hand, but on the other hand, it cooperate with governments and magnates in realizing their self-centred aims. The main function of mass media is to present moral and truth issues; however, there are also various techniques of falsifications. The main pragmatic functions of newspapers are carried out through various informational formats and language means. Headlines are very important parts of the newspaper. Their phonological, graphological, syntactical and lexical means are directed to attract the reader’s attention in order to form a favourable readership. The mass media message can be realized through diverse linguistic and structural means. Linguistic parameters include: linguistic operators, naming forms, attributes and actional verbs; structural means, such as deleting techniques and unmarked order of clause elements. The principle tools of a political leader are evaluative means of language. They comprise word-formation means, stereotypical images, animalistic metaphors, phrasal verbs and elements of irony.

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### **LINGVISTINĖS PRIEMONĖS, PADEDANČIOS REALIZUOTI IR ĮVERTINTI PAGRINDINĘ LAIKRAŠČIO ANTRAŠČIŲ MINTĮ**

Straipsnio tikslas yra išanalizuoti antraščių ir žiniasklaidos santraukų lingvistines bei struktūrines priemones. Pagrindinis dėmesys yra skiriamas laikraščių antraštėms. Laikraščiai įvairiomis savo išraiškos formomis stengiasi įtakoti skaitytoją, suformuoti visuotinę nuomonę, patalpinti į pragmatiškai naudingus rėmus. Tai atliekama ne vien loginio argumentavimo priemonėmis, bet taip pat emocingų teiginių pagalba bei naudojant pačias efektyviausias lingvistines priemones: stereotipus, metaforas, frazinius veiksmožodžius ir t. t.

**Raktiniai žodžiai:** kalbos operatoriai, įvardijimas, stereotipai, ironiški niuansai, animalistinė metafora.

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