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# HEADLINES IN BRITISH AND GERMAN ONLINE NEWSPAPERS

Dynamic development of online press has been accompanied by various transformations in journalistic genres and news discourse. The following study focuses on headlines in online newspapers. The aim of the analysis was to investigate whether the online headlines conform to the conventions traditionally associated with the shape of the newspaper headlines. The analysis covered headlines of news stories from selected British and German online newspapers, both hard and soft news headlines. The study involved the examination of the discourse, syntactic and lexical properties of the titles. The analysis investigated as well the relation between the homepage headline and the story headline in online newspapers. The analysis showed that online headlines follow selected conventions of traditional print headlines, but that they have also developed features of their own. The article discusses certain differences between the newspapers covered in the analysis as well.

## INTRODUCTION

The homepages of online newspapers have a complex structure and differ in many respects from the front pages of print newspapers (Ward 2002, Kolodzy 2006). The homepages perform the role of a gate to the whole offer of the newspaper. In order to show the abundance of the offer, the homepages usually assume the form of a collection of diversified sections and news sections with news abstracts, composed solely of headlines or of headlines and leads to the stories reported on by the newspaper (Ward 2002: 124, Knox 2007). For these reasons, the role of the headlines published on the main website has become more crucial than in traditional newspapers. They function as the major constituents of the news sections and often as the sole 'entry points' to the stories covered by the newspaper (Tattersall 2008: 212). Their function is to attract the readers and persuade them to click on the link and read the entire story. In view of this change it becomes significant to investigate the stylistic and structural shape of online headlines and the strategies used in the construction of the titles.

The following analysis focuses on the properties of headlines in online newspapers. The purpose of the study was to investigate the basic structural and functional properties of the news story headlines published in online newspapers. The aim was to investigate if online headlines are structured according to the conventions applied in traditional print headlines and point to potential differ-

ences in the shape of the headlines on the web. The analysis covered headlines from hard news and soft news sections. Correspondence between the headlines published on the homepage of a newspaper and the headlines of the actual news stories was investigated as well, in order to provide a comprehensive illustration of the news story headlines online.

The analysis covered headlines published on the homepages of three British and three German newspapers (*The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *Die Welt*, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* (*SZ*) and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (*FAZ*)). The study encompassed 130 headlines from the homepage of each newspaper collected over two months (January and February 2012). The inclusion of headlines from two languages was designed to investigate the degree of standardization in the shape of the titles of news stories.

## HEADLINES – GENERAL PROPERTIES

Considerable research has been done into the formal and functional features of headlines due to a significant function they play in newspaper discourse and their interesting stylistic shapes. 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 readers' views and attitudes (Keeble 1994, Reah 1998, Wojtak 2004). As Allan (2004: 100) emphasizes, a headline establishes the ideological principles for the interpretation of the content. Headlines, when taken together, may help index the contents and set the tone of the newspaper (Brooks *et al*. 2008: 227).

Headlines comprise a unique component of news stories also due to their stylistic shape. They apply a variety of syntactic and lexical properties, as well as rhetorical devices. The most conspicuous lexical properties of headlines encompass the following (Reah 1998: 13, Rafferty 2008: 231):
   – use of semantic ambiguity
   – use of word play
   – use of emotive vocabulary
   – use of short words – the so-called 'subs' words (probe, vow, tot, cop, hit, etc.).

As far as syntactic properties are concerned, the following features have been found the most frequent (Reah 1998: 32):
   – use of active voice
   – use of the present tense
   – omission of grammatical words
   – omission of verbs and auxiliaries

– use of nominalizations
– use of class shift.

Intertextuality is another property of headlines which is frequently exploited. Headlines have been observed to carry references to culture, history, literature, etc. (Reah 1998).

Research on headlines reveals that there can be seen regularity across languages as to the shape and function of headlines (Keeble 1994: 186). Analogy between German and American headlines was shown by Kniffka (1980), who argued that certain conventions of headline structure are valid internationally.


## HEADLINES IN ONLINE NEWSPAPERS


The previous studies have shown that online headlines exhibit many features typical of print headlines apply to headlines in online news sources (Kolodzy 2006, Brooks *et al*. 2008: 256). It has been observed, however, that the context, that is the web, may in certain ways influence the shape of headlines. According to a recent eyetrack study investigating online reading practices, users pay the most attention to the headlines located on the top left side of a page, focus on the first words of a headline to decide if a story is of any interest to them, and read short text blocks (Outing and Ruel 2004, Ruel and Nora 2007). Moreover, as Kolodzy (2006: 198) emphasizes, web users, more than print newspaper readers, expect to obtain basic information by scanning the headline only, without the need to delve into the complete story.

A change in function and the context of the publication of a headline have triggered further changes affecting the structure of a headline. It is a frequent suggestion of practitioners to make headlines succinct, simple and informative and to use plain language (Kolodzy 2006: 196, Ward 2002: 128-129). It has been observed that readers prefer clear and informative headlines to those exploiting stylistic figures or playful puns which do not reveal the gist of a story (Brooks *et al*. 2008: 257). For these reasons, headlines used in print may be inadequate for online publications. Troffer, quoted by Ward (2002: 129-30), states what follows:

> "Your headings and page titles should explain clearly the topic addressed on each page in terms that reflect your audience's perspective. Avoid cute, clever or cryptic headings, as well as headings that reflect only the author's perspective. Remember – when readers are scanning one of your pages, all they will really 'see' at first will be the page title and headings."

It can be seen that both online and offline, the art of writing headlines is difficult, yet crucial for successful journalism. However, online, in contrast to the offline context, a headline may be the only way of communicating news content

to the reader. Therefore, an editor needs to shape the headline in such a way that it provides enough information on the content of the story, attracts the readers, and encourages them to explore the whole story.

STRUCTURAL PROPERTIES OF ONLINE HEADLINES

The analysis of online headlines proves that they follow selected conventions typical of print headlines. A range of the aforementioned syntactic and lexical properties proved to be frequent in this context as well, yet not all of them turned out to be equally regular. The examination revealed that online headlines have also developed features of their own. A few properties differentiating the headlines used in both media can be outlined. Moreover, certain differences between the newspapers covered in the study have been identified.

The analysis proved a relative diversity in the structures of the headlines in the respective newspapers. There are differences between the newspapers in the length of headlines, with the shortest headlines in *FAZ* and *The Guardian* (4,89 and 5,74 words on average, respectively) and the longest in *The Independent* and *Die Welt* (7,61 and 7,26 words on average, respectively). The headlines ranged from short two-word titles to long compound sentences and multipartite titles. A tendency towards conciseness in the expression of content in the headlines proved particularly strong in *FAZ*, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* and *The Guardian*. Headlines are dense, more of a telegraphic style, and less descriptive than the headlines in other newspapers. By contrast, *The Independent* has the highest number of words per headline and the headlines have a more expanded structure. The length of an online headline, analogously to print headlines, may be determined by the constraints of the web page design and composition – the use of a particular size of modules, internal division of thematic columns, etc. Still, the design does not seem to be the only decisive factor in this respect. The size of columns on the two websites mentioned above is analogical, yet the length of the headlines is visibly different, which may prove that the structure of a headline is a matter of the individual policy of a newspaper.

As far as syntactic structures are concerned, the analysis proved that simple sentences and nominalizations belong to the most frequent syntactic structures used in the construction of headlines. However, also other structures, such as compound sentences and multipartite titles, which are not typical of print headlines, proved to be noticeable among online titles. The use of these syntactic structures proved equally frequent in soft news and hard news headlines and no significant differences in this respect were identified.

In general, the highest rate of occurrence was stated for headlines structured in the form of a simple sentence. For example:

> US teen escapes gunmen in Philippines jungle [The Times]
> Sacked policeman kills wife and child [The Guardian]
> Obama verliert Top-Berater [Die Welt]
> Deutschland will der Rezession widerstehen [FAZ]

The headlines in this form dominated on the websites of *The Guardian* and *Die Welt* in particular (55,38% and 54,61% of all headlines, respectively, as against 33,07% in *FAZ*). The headlines exhibit the properties defined earlier, that is the preference for the use of the present tense and active voice. As far as the English headlines are concerned, the omission of grammatical words, such as articles, and/or determinatives was also identified.

The use of simple sentences in online headlines, analogically to print headlines, helps keep the title short and concise. The use of such structures and the active voice in particular facilitates the reception and comprehension of headlines, while the use of the present tense points to the immediacy of the news, and freshness of the broadcast (Keeble 1994, Reah 1998). In this way, the headlines provide the readers with basic news concerning the key topic presented in a clear and understandable message.

Nominalizations were the second most frequent form of headlines in English and German online newspapers. Nominalized forms proved the most frequent in *The Times* and *FAZ* (33,84% and 29,23%, respectively, compared with 10% of the headlines in *Die Welt*). In this collection two types of structures were included: headlines based on noun phrases and verbless clauses. For example:

> Huge increase in US executive pay [The Guardian]
> Britain battered by gale force winds [The Times]
> Sarkozys fadenscheiniges Manöver [SZ]
> Gegenkandidat mit Putins Segen [FAZ]

Research devoted to print headlines proved that nominalizations belong to standard forms applied in headlines across newspapers from culturally distinct backgrounds (Keeble 1994, Reah 1998). The popularity of such forms in the analyzed collection of titles confirms a considerable similarity between print and online conventions used in structuring headlines. Their popularity in both contexts may result from the fact that such forms help illustrate complex issues in a compact and tight manner.

In the collection of headlines there occurred instances of compound sentences as well. The structures involved both coordinate and subordinate sentences. For instance:

> The scandal threatening 40,000 UK women exposes a sector that for years has prospered without proper regulation [The Independent]
> Navy Seals who killed bin Laden free pirate hostages times [The Times]
> Erster Bundespräsident, der sich selbst begnadigt [Die Welt]
> Wer Neues will, muss das Alte marode machen [FAZ]

Headlines in the form of compound sentences proved to be the most frequent in *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* and *The Independent* (6,15% and 4,61% of the headlines, respectively, as against *The Guardian*, with only 0,76% of such headlines in the collection). Such structures are not often found in print headlines due to their complex form and increased length, which requires more effort from the reader to process the message. Yet, the use of compound sentences in online newspapers seems to be explicable in the light of the new context in which headlines appear, as described above. The use of a headline in a compound form serves to increase their descriptive character and enhance their informative value.

A further structure observed among the headlines, which differentiates web headlines from print titles, are composite, multipartite titles. The headlines in question consist of two parts – each of which may have a different form and a different function. The component parts of multipart headlines include simple sentences and nominal phrases, used in different configurations. Such headlines proved to be the most frequent on the website of *The Independent* (16,92%), and relatively frequent in *The Guardian* and *FAZ* (6,15% and 5,38%).

The most frequent form of multipartite headlines are the titles consisting of a nominal form and a sentence. The elements comprising the headline fulfill different functions and carry different meanings. One of the functions of the initial component of the headline is to identify the place of event reported about in the story, the actor of the news, or the author, or perform an evaluative function (Tereszkiewicz: in print):

> John Hemming: Self-styled 'love rat of the year' who became scourge of adulterers [The Independent]
> Peterlee shooting: teenager escapes as four others killed [The Guardian]
> Cameron: Die EU ist für uns Briten lebenswichtig [FAZ]
> Es gibt keinen Ausweg: Die Weihnachtskugel [FAZ]

As mentioned above, *The Independent* stands out among other newspapers in the frequent use of such forms of headlines. The tendency to use composite forms of headlines may be caused by the lack of additional information in the form of a lead or body of the article, which could provide room for interpretation of the title. In *The Independent*, the title often summarizes the news report. The other portals usually offer headlines and leads, which together inform on the content of the story (cf. *ibid.*).

Multipartite headlines proved the least frequent on the analyzed German websites. A low number of multipartite headlines can be explained by other structural conventions used in news sections in German online newspapers. On these websites, namely, in contrast to other news pages, a conventional headline comprises the component of a kicker which provides additional meanings and identification of the event. For this reason, extending the structure of the headline would prove superfluous and would unnecessarily make the structure more complex.

In general, with respect to syntactic properties, it can be seen that headlines in the form of a simple sentence and a nominalized structure are the most frequent in online newspapers. Among the new properties which seem to be typical of web titles we may find the use of compound and multipartite headlines. The high number of sentence form headlines, involving both simple and compound headlines, and the occurrence of multipartite headlines, prove the emphasis on the clarity and comprehensibility of the headlines in the online context, as well as the focus on their informative role.

## DISCOURSE AND LEXICAL PROPERTIES OF HEADLINES

With respect to discourse and lexical properties, not all the features conventionally associated with headlines proved frequent. What is more, in contrast to the case of syntactic structures, more differences between the respective newspapers were identified. A greater discrepancy between hard news and soft news headlines was also observed. It turned out that playfulness and expressiveness are typical predominantly of soft news headlines in online newspapers. Among the properties the most frequent for hard news headlines was a high degree of informative content, the use of quotations, and precision. The properties of soft news, by contrast, encompass word play, intertextuality and interactivity. The difference in the shape of the headlines, in this case, was closely associated with the subject-matter and significance of the news and the stories. Soft news is usually a part of sections on arts, life, entertainment, recreation, education (Keeble 1994, Cotter 2010: 145). Soft news stories allow a journalist greater freedom of shape, style and expression, which can be lighter, and more personal (Bell 1991, Reah 1998).

## HARD NEWS HEADLINES

The analysis of the content of hard news headlines online proves that the titles are rich in informative value. It appears that attractiveness and creativity in the shape of the headline have given way to informativity and clarity. The analysis of the content of online headlines proves that the titles aim at giving the reader the gist of the news event. Among the components of an event on which the headlines focus are mainly the event itself and the participants of the events, that is the 'what' and/or the 'who' of the event covered in the story. For example:

Cain suspends GOP campaign [The Guardian]
Archbishop orders child abuse inquiry [The Times]

CSU plant Alterversorge-Pflicht für Selbstständige [SZ]
Merkel will Finanztransaktionsteuer notfalls ohne Briten einfuehren [FAZ]

The headlines reveal the core of the event, and direct attention to the news described in the story. The first words of the headline carry the main meaning – they identify the actor of the news, the place or the fact reported on. Such form of the headlines complies with the users' reading patterns and the practice of scanning the headlines in the search for news and interesting content, as described above (Outing and Ruel 2004, Ruel and Nora 2007). This form allows the readers to quickly obtain basic information concerning the events.

The informative content of the headlines was also enhanced by the provision of detailed numerical data. This strategy proved to be particularly frequent in hard news headlines of the British newspapers, above all in *The Guardian* and *The Independent*, where these forms were present in 10,76% and 7,69% of the headlines, respectively. The headlines with detailed information were not restricted to business news, but occurred in various thematic sections of hard news, e.g.:

UK misses out on £10bn sale of jets [The Times]
20,000 army jobs to go by 2018 [The Guardian]
150 Milliarden Euro aus der UE für den IWF [FAZ]
EZB leiht den Banken 489 Milliarden Euro für drei Jahre [FAZ]

The use of precise data enhances the exactitude of news and confirms the propensity towards precision. Yet, it also performs an impressive and persuasive function. The use of such data increases the impact the headline may make on the readers (Keeble 1994: 156). The frequency of such headlines proves that precision is considered as an effective tool of attracting readers to click on the title.

The presence of quotes is another worth mentioning property of online headlines. The frequency of quotes in the headlines of the respective newspapers proved similar, and ranged from 6,92% of the headlines in *The Times* and *FAZ*, through 6,15% in *Die Welt* and *The Guardian*, to 5,38% of the headlines in *The Independent* and *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*. The headlines included quotations of various length – ranging from the citation of selected words or phrases, to the quotation of full sentences.

In the case of quotations in the German headlines, the text of the message was placed in quotation marks and the author was identified in the lead or kicker. In the case of the British headlines, no or single quotation marks were used, and the speaker was specified in the headline. The quotations may perform various functions and express various meanings.

Interesting examples of the use of sentence-quotes were identified in the analyzed collection:

Blair: 'I never did enough to remove poor teachers' [The Times]
Miliband has no strategy, says ally [The Guardian]

"Griechenland ist ein Fass ohne Boden" [Die Welt]
"Wulff muss reinen Tisch machen" [SZ]

The abovementioned headlines quote a personal opinion. The quotes encapsulate personal views or interpretation of events expressed in strong or loaded words. In that way, they allow a degree of personalization and individualization in headlines, add a human dimension to the title, which enhances the newsworthiness of the stories. A personalized expression of this kind provides authenticity and makes a greater impact than an accusation issued by a third party (Keeble 1994: 74). Moreover, such citations allow a reporter to smuggle an element of interpretation, yet without taking responsibility for the words uttered. As Cotter (2010: 146) states, cited expressions enhance the neutrality of the reporter's statement – the journalist becomes just a messenger conveying a view, while remaining objective him/herself.

The headlines below exemplify the quotation of selected phrases or expressions, which proved to be frequent among the British headlines in particular. For example:

Disaster cruise ship 'hit unmarked rock' [The Times]
'Bitter blow' for fishermen as Brussels cuts sea time [The Times]
Nigeria blasts are 'declaration of war' [The Guardian]
Als Wulff gegen Bild einen "Krieg führen" wollte [Die Welt]
Merkel vertraut Wulff auch bei "neu auftauchenden Fragen" [FAZ]

In the first example, the quotation presents the reason for the catastrophe of a ship – the use of quotations signals that this fact is considered as a potential reason for the accident, not yet validated and confirmed. The second example, enhanced by alliteration, is particularly interesting, being a vivid and meaningful presentation of the fact described. The value of the headline is increased by the polysemy of the word *blow*, which improves the vividness of the headline. In the next examples, the quoted words express a serious evaluation of the situation, which enhances the impact of the headline and the importance of the story behind it.

Quotations constitute a significant element of news stories in general. In headlines, their role is also meaningful. They help convey illustrative, colourful, incisive remarks concerning various issues (Keeble 1994: 74). Naturally, the choice of the words and expressions quoted carries additional meanings itself and has a great persuasive potential and impressive value. This appears to be valuable especially in the context of online news stories, where the appeal of a headline is particularly significant.

As far as emotive vocabulary is concerned, in print headlines it is used to enhance the impressive value of the headline, the value of the story behind the headline, point to the importance of the news, their impact force (Reah 1998). Instances of this strategy were also identified in the analyzed material, yet rela-

tively infrequently (the highest percentage was stated for *The Independent* and *The Guardian* 4,61% and 3,35%, respectively), e.g.:

> Peru's darkest secret [The Independent]
> GP's fury over online tirades [The Guardian]
> Die horrorfahrt der Costa Concordia [Die Welt]
> Zehntausende gehen gegen Putin auf die Straße [SZ]

The use of the so-called 'sub words' is also worth mentioning, since they are regarded as a conventional feature of British print headlines. As far as the use of sub words in online headlines is concerned, their occurrence proved relatively irregular, with the highest frequency in *The Guardian*, in 6,92% of the headlines, and the lowest in *The Independent*, where they were identified in 1,53% of the titles. These frequencies reflect the differences in the syntactic structures of the headlines on these websites, with the preference for concise and short headlines in *The Guardian* and long, expanded titles in *The Independent*. However, the low frequency of sub words on the whole may seem surprising. Yet, it seems to confirm the observation concerning the tendency to increase the clarity and intelligibility of the headlines in online newspapers.

The above-mentioned examples illustrate yet a further property of the headlines, that is their focus on negativity and drama. It can be seen that it is negative events that are the most frequently foregrounded in the titles in both English and German newspapers:

> Protesters killed despite Syria monitors [The Independent]
> Coalition tensions boil over after Brussels [The Times]
> Europa droht nächste Eskalationsstufe in der Krise [Die Welt]
> Angeklagter erschießt jungen Staatsanwalt [SZ]

The foregrounding of tragic, dramatic events in the headlines, common in traditional print newspapers as well, serves to enhance the newsworthiness of the stories and the affective value of the reports. It has been found out, namely, that stories concerning conflicts, negative and dramatic events are more valuable and newsworthy than stories on positive events (Fowler 1991, Cotter 2010).

## SOFT NEWS HEADLINES

Among the properties of soft news headlines was their interactive and dialogical nature. This was evident in a relative frequency of headlines in the interrogative and imperative form, which proved the most frequent among the British newspapers (13,15% of soft news headlines in *The Guardian*, 11,40% in *The Times*), with a slightly lower occurrence of interactivity on the German websites (6,15% in *FAZ*, 5,38% in *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*). For example:

> Giving up alcohol for January? Your liver may not thank you [The Independent]
> Poster boys. Meet the 'Ikea anarchists' [The Guardian]
> Wer wusste was wann? [FAZ]
> Wozu Ballettenunterricht? [FAZ]

The headlines use interrogative and imperative forms, which 'soften' the story (Keeble 1994: 124), and encourage interaction with the reader. Interactivity and dialogical character of the headlines can be regarded as a strategy to enhance the impressive role of the headline, to attract the readers to the story and raise their interest in its content.

Word play, regarded as a conventional property of headlines in print (Rafferty 2008), turned out to be typical of soft news web headlines in particular. In hard news headlines, the use of this strategy proved infrequent with only single examples of word play. The degree of playfulness of the headlines, jocularity and 'lightness' of style in soft news headlines proved conspicuous on the British websites, *The Times* and *The Guardian* in particular (9,16% and 7,3%, respectively). Among the German newspapers, the feature was the most frequent in *FAZ* (6,15%). In the headlines of these newspapers we may come across interesting examples of rhyme, and/or word play:

> Clickenomics [The Times]
> Connected cafes. Coffee and WiFi [The Guardian]
> Norway. Dead herring? [The Guardian]
> Mit amerikanischer Brille [FAZ]
> Zug im Verzug [FAZ]

The use of such forms in *The Times* and *FAZ* is particularly worth noting. Such approach to structuring headlines may be seen as a way of changing the image of the newspapers – from conservative, traditionalist, information-oriented and opinion-forming dailies, to more lighthearted, open to users, and interactive. The use of such devices may serve as a means of attracting readers by offering them some entertainment in addition to information.

With respect to intertextuality a similar tendency as with word play was identified. Intertextual references occurred mainly among soft news headlines, with the highest occurrence in *The Times* (6,15%) and *FAZ* (4,61%). References which dominate are associated with the area of popular culture – music, film, television. In the examples to follow, for instance, we may see references to music, historical events, to literature and movies:

> Knowing me, knowing you – Elisabeth Luard and Clare Richardson [The Independent]
> Some like it 3D [The Times]
> Ich setze um, also bin ich [FAZ]
> Schlaflos aus Seattle [FAZ]

All these intertextual references make the titles more attractive, interesting on the stylistic layer.

There proved to be a significant difference in the lexical and discourse properties between soft and hard news headlines. The analysis of the content of hard news headlines online proves that the titles aim at providing information. The aim of the headline is to inform the reader about the key event described in the story. The headlines of soft news differ significantly from the hard news titles. The headlines in these sections are low in informative content and the level of factuality. By contrast, they are more stylistically diversified, heterogeneous and carry a dose of innovativeness and creativity. A considerable degree of expressiveness and personalization can be seen in these cases as well. The inclusion on the homepage of the soft and hard news sections proves the wish to attract the readers and show the abundance of the offer. This distinction, reflected in stylistic differences between the headlines, confirms that the portals try to combine information with entertainment. The variety of content, and the stylistic diversification of the headlines serve as a means to enhance the attractiveness of the offer in order to catch the attention of the readers and encourage them to explore the stories, which is particularly important in the case of online newspapers.

## HOMEPAGE HEADLINES VS. STORY HEADLINES

Another aspect investigated in the following analysis concerned the correspondence between the headlines published on the main website and the headlines on the story pages.

As mentioned above, the headlines on the homepages constitute the components of news sections. Their function is to introduce the news and encourage the readers to follow the headline and become familiar with the entire story (Knox 2007, 2009).

The analysis showed that in the German newspapers, in all the cases, the headline of a story published on the homepage corresponded to the headline of the news story behind it. No changes to the structure of the titles were identified.

A different situation was observed on the British websites. It turned out that the headline presented on the main page does not necessarily reflect the title presented on the story page. Differences were identified in 86,6% of the cases in *The Guardian*, 41,53% in *The Independent*, and 7,69% in *The Times*. The differences encompass the shape – structure, content, and perspective implied. The most frequent structural transformations involve elaboration of form and content, specification of the reference and context, inclusion of detail in the story headline, decrease of interactivity and negativity of the headline, and a change of focus.

The basic contrast between the headlines in the news abstracts on the homepage (H) and the titles of the stories (S) involved a contrast between a dense, compact

form and a more detailed, elaborated title. Structural transformations encompass the expansion of verbless, non-finite structures into full sentence forms. For example:

> H: Raped Afghan woman freed from jail [The Guardian]
> S: Afghan woman jailed after being raped is freed after two years in Kabul prison
>
> H: US and UK 'behind scientist's death' [The Guardian]
> S: Iran accuses US and Britain of role in killing of nuclear scientist

Structural modifications are closely associated with content modifications involving the inclusion of additional aspects of the story in question. To the most frequent modifications belong clarification of the reference of the headline by means of supplying details of the stories. The abstract headlines present a general overview of the event, while the story headlines make the circumstances of the events more specific. The details supplied concern the actors of the news and the circumstances of the events – more specifically the 'who', 'what' and 'why' or 'where' of the events. In the examples below we may see that the abstract headlines have a short, compact form stating the key event of a news story in general terms. The story headlines, by contrast, specify the actors of the events and the context of the story, the people involved and the reasons for actions:

> H: Russian leaders bid to calm protests [The Guardian]
> S: Putin and Medvedev try to calm Russian election outcry
> H: Romney attacks Gingrich over ethics [The Guardian]
> S: Mitt Romney's new ad attacks Newt Gingrich over old ethics violation
> H: University protest ban condemned [The Guardian]
> S: Birmingham University protest ban attacked as 'aggressive and censorious'

A further distinction was that the headlines of the abstracts proved to be more dialogical and interactive. In the examples below we may see that abstract headlines are given the forms of direct speech imperatives, with the author/source of the message following. In this way, the headlines have the form of short commands which express the message in a clear, succinct manner. This shape enhances the strength and straightforwardness of the headlines. By contrast, story headlines have the form of a declarative sentence, with deontic modality expressed by means of modal verbs or lexical verbs stating the necessity of a certain action. For example:

> H: Let patients see records, says report [The Independent]
> S: Patients should have online access to medical records, says report
> H: Tackle media sexism, Leveson urged [The Guardian]
> S: Leveson inquiry should address media sexism, women's groups demand
> H: End attacks on Christians, says pope [The Guardian]
> S: Pope Benedict XVI appeals for end to discrimination against Christians

Abstract headlines prove to be more dramatized. In the examples below, the death of the people is foregrounded, enhancing in this way the negativity and personalization of the events, which in turn makes the story more newsworthy. The story headlines do not foreground the same aspects of the event, which is clearly seen in the first example, where the headline focuses on the main actor of the news, the perpetrator and his action:

> H: At least four dead in Liège attack [The Guardian]
> S: Liège gunman in bloody assault on shoppers and commuters
> H: 27 dead in Nigeria church attacks [The Guardian]
> S: Church attacks in Nigeria leave at least 27 worshippers dead

The drama of the event described is highlighted also in the example below, which underlines the negativity of the event, and the widespread nature of the phenomenon. The headline follows the 'moral panic' format, in which "an event is presented as a threat to the social and moral order, with a view to invoking public concern" (Fulton 2005: 234). It is the story headline that clarifies the context and provides a more detailed view of the situation:

> H: Schools fall short of government targets [The Independent]
> S: One eighth of primary schools fall short of government literacy and numeracy targets

The examples provided above prove that the appeal of the homepage headlines is enhanced by the focus on negativity and conflict, which has already been underlined before. The headlines, in contrast to story headlines, tend to be more luring and striking, which is to enhance their persuasive and impressive function.

The headlines also differ with respect to the perspective with which the event is viewed. Structurally this difference involves a change from passive to active voice, and the introduction of the main verb. The focus of the headlines changes – the homepage headlines focus on the main actor of the news, while the story headlines on the event itself. In this way, the news value of personification and human-interest perspective of the story is enhanced, which contributes to the newsworthiness of the story. These examples illustrate the above-mentioned decrease in the level of density:

> H: Assange appeal bid approved [The Independent]
> S: Court approves Julian Assange appeal bid
> H: Sacked doctor awarded £4.5m [The Independent]
> S: Tribunal awards hospital consultant Eva Michalak £4.5m

The primary distinction between homepage and story headlines is that between a general, dense and compact form and an expanded message. Homepage headlines are tighter, with frequent omissions, with the content restricted to the key event described. In story headlines, by contrast, we may observe elaboration of content – information is expanded and more details are revealed. The key

event presented in the homepage headline is further illustrated and developed. This difference may be dictated by two major factors – by space constraints on the homepage and by the wish to offer the readers news in a compact form which can be processed quickly and effortlessly. Another distinction is that the homepage headlines prove to be more dramatized than the story headlines. This distinction is heavily associated with the promotional function of the headlines on the homepage. The focus on the drama, on the news values of negativity and/or personification serve to enhance the newsworthiness of the reports, attract the readers and draw them into the stories.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis has proved that online headlines reflect many of the properties of traditional print headlines. However, it can be seen that the function of the titles and their structure have evolved in certain respects and have departed from the conventions of their print equivalents. What is more, the distinction between hard and soft news titles is clearly visible online. With respect to hard news headlines, the analysis has confirmed that the informative and summarizing functions have become the most important in this context (cf. Olszański 2006), and that playfulness, ambiguity and punning have given way to specificity and intelligibility. It is soft news headlines that focus on the appeal to the readers and exploit word play, puns, or intertextuality and interactivity. This evolution clearly reflects the influence of the context of publication, but also the editors' policy to combine information and entertainment in order to satisfy different needs of the readers, i.e. those expecting quick and intelligible news and/or interesting, playful stories.

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