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PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF HEADLINES IN ENGLISH MASS MEDIA

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Annotatsiya. Mazkur tezisda ingliz tilidagi ommaviy axborot vositalari sarlavhalarining pragmatik xususiyatlari nutqiy aktlar nazariyasi, P. Graysning kooperativlik tamoyili hamda relevantlik nazariyasi asosida tahlil qilinadi. Sarlavhaning axborot berish, diqqatni jalb etish, baholash va ta'sir o'tkazish funksiyalari implikatura, presuppozitsiya, ellipsis, so'z o'yini va intertekstuallik vositalari orqali amalga oshishi ko'rsatib beriladi.

Kalit so'zlar: sarlavha, pragmatika, nutqiy akt, implikatura, presuppozitsiya, relevantlik, media diskurs, klikbeyt, perlokutiv ta'sir.

Аннотация. В тезисе рассматриваются прагматические особенности заголовков англоязычных средств массовой информации с позиций теории речевых актов, принципа кооперации П. Грайса и теории релевантности. Показано, что информативная, аттрактивная, оценочная и воздействующая функции заголовка реализуются посредством импликатур, пресуппозиций, эллипсиса, языковой игры и интертекстуальности.

Ключевые слова: заголовок, прагматика, речевой акт, импликатура, пресуппозиция, релевантность, медиадискурс, кликбейт, перлокутивный эффект.

Abstract. The thesis examines the pragmatic features of English mass media headlines from the standpoint of speech act theory, H. P. Grice's Cooperative Principle and relevance theory. It is shown that the informative, attractive, evaluative and persuasive functions of the headline are realised through implicature, presupposition, ellipsis, word play and intertextuality.

Keywords: headline, pragmatics, speech act, implicature, presupposition, relevance, media discourse, clickbait, perlocutionary effect.

In contemporary media discourse the headline has become the most frequently read and, arguably, the most influential component of a news text. Readers, especially online, scan dozens of headlines and decide within seconds which story deserves attention. Consequently, the headline has become an autonomous utterance that informs, evaluates, persuades and competes for clicks. T. A. van Dijk regarded the headline, together with the lead, as the textual expression of the semantic macrostructure of news, i.e. of its most important topic[1]. However, a purely semantic approach cannot explain why headlines are so often elliptical, ambiguous, allusive or

[1] van Dijk T. A. News as Discourse. – Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988. – P. 53.

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deliberately incomplete; these properties become meaningful only from a pragmatic point of view.

The relevance of the study is determined by the growing role of the media in shaping public opinion, by the digital transformation of news consumption and by the need to develop the media literacy of learners of English. The aim of the paper is to identify and systematise the principal pragmatic features of English mass media headlines. The material comprises headlines of British and American quality newspapers, tabloids and online platforms. Pragmatic, contextual and comparative methods are employed.

From the standpoint of speech act theory, a headline is a complex speech act in which several illocutionary forces coexist. Its primary illocution is assertive: the headline reports an event or states a fact ("Bank of England raises interest rates"). At the same time, it always performs an implicit directive act addressed to the reader – "read this article" – and very often an expressive act conveying evaluation. J. L. Austin's distinction between the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act, i.e. what is achieved by saying something, is particularly productive here[2], since the ultimate goal of any headline is perlocutionary: to attract attention, arouse interest and make the reader continue reading. Hence, alongside declarative structures we find interrogative headlines ("Is the four-day week the future of work?") functioning as indirect directives; imperative headlines ("Forget diets – sleep more") simulating a dialogue with the addressee.

The specific grammar of headlines, often called "headlinese", can be adequately described in terms of H. P. Grice's Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims[3]. Headlines systematically omit articles, auxiliaries and the copula, use the present simple for past events and the to-infinitive for future ones ("PM to resign", "Floods hit northern England"). Formally these devices violate the maxim of Quantity, yet the reader easily reconstructs the missing information relying on the genre convention. More significant is the deliberate flouting of the maxims. The flouting of the maxim of Manner produces intentional ambiguity, as in the famous New York Post headline "Headless Body in Topless Bar", where the contrast of two adjectives creates a grotesque and memorable effect. The flouting of the maxim of Quality underlies hyperbole and metaphor typical of tabloids ("Storm of the century"). As D. Reah points out, the headline is designed not only to inform but also to attract the reader by means of emotive vocabulary, word play and shared cultural knowledge[4]. In each case the reader derives an implicature, which increases their involvement in the text.

The most comprehensive explanation of headline pragmatics is offered by relevance theory. D. Dor convincingly argues that headlines function as "relevance optimizers": they are designed to provide the reader with the optimal ratio between contextual effects and processing effort, signalling the most relevant aspect of the story in the most economical form[5]. According to D. Sperber and D. Wilson, every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal

[2] Austin J. L. How to Do Things with Words. – Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962. – P. 101.
[3] Grice H. P. Logic and Conversation // Syntax and Semantics. Vol. 3: Speech Acts / ed. by P. Cole, J. L. Morgan. – New York: Academic Press, 1975. – P. 45–46.
[4] Reah D. The Language of Newspapers. – 2nd ed. – London; New York: Routledge, 2002. – P. 13.
[5] Dor D. On newspaper headlines as relevance optimizers // Journal of Pragmatics. – 2003. – Vol. 35, No. 5. – P. 696.

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relevance[6]; therefore, if a headline demands extra processing effort because of a pun, an allusion or an unusual collocation, the reader expects to be rewarded with additional cognitive effects. The Sun's headline "Super Caley Go Ballistic, Celtic Are Atrocious" alludes to a song from "Mary Poppins", and recognising the allusion produces humour and solidarity with the reader. Quality newspapers use such allusions in a more restrained manner, usually supported by a subheading.

An important pragmatic property of headlines is their capacity to impose a certain interpretation of events through presupposition and evaluative lexis. A headline such as "Why the government's housing plan has failed" presupposes the failure of the plan and presents it as given information not subject to discussion. Evaluative words such as slam, blast, axe, row, chaos or fury frame events in terms of conflict. A. Bell links such choices with news values: negativity, personalisation, proximity and eliteness determine both what becomes news and how it is formulated in the headline[7]. In quotation headlines ("'Unacceptable': unions reject pay offer") the editor reproduces an emotional assessment while formally distancing the newspaper from it. Thus, evaluation is embedded in the presupposed part of the message and escapes the reader's critical attention.

The digital environment has significantly modified the pragmatics of headlines. Online, the headline often appears separately from the article, and its effectiveness is measured by the click-through rate. This has led to the spread of clickbait, which J. N. Blom and K. R. Hansen describe as forward-reference: the use of cataphoric demonstratives and pronouns ("This is why…", "Here's what happened next", "You won't believe what she said") pointing to information withheld until the reader opens the article[8]. Pragmatically, such headlines violate the maxim of Quantity in the opposite direction from traditional headlinese: instead of compressing the main information, they conceal it, creating a "curiosity gap". The analysis of the material shows that tabloids and online platforms favour emotive, directive and dialogic strategies, whereas quality newspapers rely predominantly on informative assertive headlines and resort to ambiguity and allusion mainly in features and opinion columns. However, online competition is gradually blurring this boundary.

In conclusion, the English mass media headline is a pragmatically multifunctional utterance in which the informative function is closely intertwined with the attractive, evaluative and persuasive ones. Its pragmatic features include a complex illocutionary nature with a dominant perlocutionary aim, the conventionalised violation of the maxim of Quantity in headlinese, the intentional flouting of the maxims of Manner and Quality to generate implicatures, the orientation towards optimal relevance, the use of presupposition and evaluative lexis as instruments of covert influence and, in the digital environment, the strategy of forward-reference.

The results can be applied in teaching pragmatics, stylistics and media literacy. Further research may focus on a comparison of English and Uzbek headlines.

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[6] Sperber D., Wilson D. Relevance: Communication and Cognition. – 2nd ed. – Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. – P. 158.

[7] Bell A. The Language of News Media. – Oxford: Blackwell, 1991. – P. 156.

[8] Blom J. N., Hansen K. R. Click bait: Forward-reference as lure in online news headlines // Journal of Pragmatics. – 2015. – Vol. 76. – P. 87.

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