

การศึกษาโครงสร้างพาดหัวข่าวในหนังสือพิมพ์ภาษาอังกฤษ

A STUDY OF HEADLINE STRUCTURES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS

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งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาโครงสร้างของพาดหัวข่าวหนังสือพิมพ์ภาษาอังกฤษทั้งในประเภทกระดาษและออนไลน์จากหนังสือพิมพ์ภาษาอังกฤษ The Nation และ Bangkok Post ที่วางขายในประเทศไทย จำนวนรวมของพาดหัวข่าวทั้งในแบบกระดาษและออนไลน์ของหนังสือพิมพ์ดังกล่าวมาแล้วนั้นรวมทั้งหมดคือ 839 พาดหัวข่าว แยกเป็นพาดหัวข่าวจากหนังสือพิมพ์แบบกระดาษ 472 พาดหัวข่าว และจากหนังสือพิมพ์แบบออนไลน์ 367 พาดหัวข่าว ระหว่างวันที่ 8-12 มิถุนายน 2560 จากผลการวิจัยพบว่าไม่มีความแตกต่างระหว่างพาดหัวข่าวหนังสือพิมพ์ภาษาอังกฤษระหว่างหนังสือพิมพ์แบบกระดาษและหนังสือพิมพ์ออนไลน์ในแง่ของโครงสร้างที่พบบ่อยที่สุด อย่างไรก็ตามในส่วนโครงสร้างที่พบบ่อยรองลงมายังมีความต่างกันอยู่บ้าง

คำสำคัญ: พาดหัวข่าว หนังสือพิมพ์ภาษาอังกฤษ โครงสร้าง

Abstract

This research aimed to study structures of headlines in paper and online newspapers from English language newspapers sold in Thailand, The Nation and Bangkok Post. A total of 839 headlines were collected from both paper and online versions of the mentioned newspapers, divided as 472 headlines from paper newspapers and 367 headlines from online newspapers, between June 8 and 12, 2017. The findings revealed that there was no difference between paper and online newspaper headlines according to the most frequently found structures. However, for less frequently found structures, some differences were found.

Keywords: Headline, English language newspaper, Structure

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Introduction

A headline is a string of words joining together to tell a very brief story of the whole news article. It is printed in larger letters comparing to those in the news body. The size of headlines depends on how important the news is to a newspaper. Main purposes of headlines are to attract readers' attention to news body and give very short information of the news (Semino, 2009). However, there is one constraint of the creation of a headline which makes its structure unique. That is, it is doomed to the limitation of space (Eva, 2009). Since the space of a headline is very limited, it requires specific word usage which means only important words are used to contain meaning or information. That constraint makes structures of headlines different from those of sentences used in everyday conversations or communication.

Experts on headline structures such as Saxena (2004) and Semino (2018) describe about news headlines that they are likely to leave out words with no effect of change in meaning to save space. Auxiliaries and a main verb to be are usually omitted from headlines for the same reason. According to tenses, a common tense used in a newspaper headline is a present simple tense even though a situation has already occurred or happened in the past (Chovanec, 2003). One reason for the employment of the present tense is to give the feeling that the situation is new or it has just happened.

One of the experts on headline structures who proposed structures of news headlines in details was Mardh (1980). Regarding Mardh (1980), headlines can be in a variety of structures not merely in the form of sentences. They can also be in the form of phrases, for instance, noun phrases and adverb phrases. The suggested syntactic structures by Mardh (1980) are as follows:

1. Verbal Headlines

1.1 Finite Verbal Headlines, for example, Mr Wilson makes new term for EEC election issue
Omitted Auxiliary Headlines, for example, Girlfriend quizzed by the police

1.2 Non-Finite Verbal Headlines, for example, Finding an ideal home for the elderly
Subject+Subject Complement Headlines, for example, Willow meeting first step to social contract

1.3 Subject+Locative Adverbial Headlines, for example, Glasgow papers under review

1.4 Coordinated Verbal Headlines (clauses Joined with a conjunction or a comma), for example, Nine cautioned and three sent off in Cup match

2. Nominal Headlines

2.1 Unmodified Nominal Headlines, for example, The letter

2.2 Premodified Nominal Headlines, for example, A supermum's first tender touch

2.3 Postmodified Nominal Headlines, for example, The violence that simmers below society's surface

2.4 Nominal Headlines with both Pre-and Post-Modification, for example, Click Tricks by a top model

2.5 Coordinated and Appositional Nominal Headlines, for example, Professor Galbraith and the 'new socialism'

3. Adverbial Headlines

3.1 Prepositional Phrase, for example, At the kidnap gang's mercy Adverb Followed by a Prepositional Phrase, Infinitive Phrase and Conjunctive Clause, for example, Back with a sparkle

3.2 Noun Phrase functioning as a Time Adverbial, for example, Midnight in Ulster

There have been studies investigating syntactic structures of newspaper headlines either on paper or online channel which found presence of syntactic structures of both sentences and phrases. They revealed rather similar results of syntactic structures.

Chovanec (2003), studied tenses used in news headlines. She revealed that the most frequently appearing tense was the present tense. Although there were other tenses found in the investigated headlines, the number of headlines in the present tense was far more than that of other tenses. Apart from tenses, in the same study, Chavanec (2003) also found that lots of headlines were ones with omitted auxiliary verbs. Nominal headlines or ones in the structure of noun phrases were also found, and they ranked the second of the most frequently found structures.

Bonyadi & Samuel (2013) explored textual strategies employed in editorial headlines in The New York Times and Tehran Times, both from an online platform. They found that there were certain differences between these newspapers. While most of the headlines (75%) of The New York Times were nonverbal or noun phrases, or as Mardh (1980) called it nominal, merely 25% of them were verbal or sentences.

Conversely, most of the headlines (60%) of Tehran Times belonged to the verbal type whereas 40% of them were considered nonverbal. The authors indicated that while The New York Times tended to create headlines which were short and sharply-focused phrases, Tehran Times preferred headlines in the form of full sentences.

On a study of headlines of the newspaper The New Light of Myanmar, Moe (2014) found omission of an auxiliary verb in different structures, for example, omission of an auxiliary verb *be* in a passive verb form as in “Murderer (was) arrested” and the replacement of a modal auxiliary with a verb in an infinitive form to present a future situation or event as in “Nepal (will host) to host int’l trade fair”. Besides, omission of a main verb to be or a structure of a subject plus a subject complement or an adverbial was also found, for instance, “Bullock carts (are) still useful for transportation”. Apart from the aspect of omission, other structures also appeared in this study such as the use of noun strings as in “Syria refugee crisis” and noun phrases as in “Severe punishment for terrorism”.

On a study of syntactic structures between English news headlines of newspapers in the United States and Korea, Lee (2012) found certain similarities between the two sources. That is, they both contained simple sentences for the most frequently found structures, and the present tense was the most used. The second most frequent structure belonged to the verb-less construction or ones with no verbs, mostly linking verbs. The third was headlines with the omission of auxiliary verbs.

Even though there have been studies on syntactic structures of newspaper headlines, no study on headline structures on both online newspapers and paper newspapers has been investigated. This study aimed to do so by making use of the structures proposed by Mardh (1980). The reason why Mardh (1980)’s framework was applied was that this framework completes all possible structures appearing in newspaper headlines.

Materials and Methods

The recent study aimed to analyze syntactic structures of English language newspaper headlines from both paper and online platforms.

The materials employed were 839 headlines from two English language newspapers, namely The Nation and Bangkok Post, which were published and sold in

Thailand between 8 - 12 June 2017. The target headlines were chosen by random sampling method. From the total of 839 headlines, 392 headlines belonged to The Nation, 238 from paper newspapers and 154 from online newspapers, and 447 headlines belonged to Bangkok Post, 234 from paper newspapers and 213 from online newspapers. The target newspaper headlines of the online version of both newspapers were taken from applications of the newspapers. The target headlines were in single structures as described by Mardh (1980). That is, there were no headlines with more than one phrase, clause, or sentence joined together.

The target headline structures were analyzed by using the headline structures proposed by Mardh (1980) as mentioned earlier. Then, the structures of both paper and online versions were compared by employing percentage.

Results and Discussion

This study attempted to analyze the structures of newspaper headlines and compare the findings of paper newspaper headline structures to those of online. The findings appear in the following tables:

Table 1 The result of headline structures in paper newspapers

Patterns of Headline Structures		Paper Newspapers		Total (%)	Examples
		The Nation	Bangkok Post		
Verbal	Finite Verbal Headlines	152	141	293 (62.08%)	(1) Southeast Asia encounters America's NEW SHERIFF (The Nation Paper, June 8, 2017)
	Omitted Auxiliary Headlines	46	48	94 (19.92%)	(2) Singha sufficient School project gets payback with an award (Bangkok Post Paper, June 8, 2017) (3) Bodies pulled from sea after plane crash in Myanmar

Table 1 The result of headline structures in paper newspapers (Cont)

Patterns of Headline Structures		Paper Newspapers		Total (%)	Examples
		The Nation	Bangkok Post		
Non-Finite Verbal Headlines		3	4	7 (1.48%)	(The Nation Paper, June 9, 2017) (4) Farms urged to study water app (Bangkok Post Paper, June 9, 2017)
					(5) Remembering Israel's deadly attack on US forces (The Nation Paper, June 10, 2017)
					(6) Packing a punch for Suzuki (Bangkok Post Paper, June 10, 2017)
					(7) Moscow metro now more tourist-friendly (Bangkok Post Paper, June 8, 2017)
Subject+Subject Complement Headlines		12	9	21 (4.45%)	(8) Protections elusive for child servants (Bangkok Post Paper, June 9, 2017)
					(9) US attorney-general next in Russia scandal's spotlight (Bangkok Post Paper, June 12, 2017)
Subject+Locative Adverbial Headlines		0	2	2 (0.42%)	(10) N Korea ICBM 'not far away' (The Nation Paper, June 12, 2017)
Nominal	Coordinated Verbal Headlines	0	0	0 (0%)	-
	Unmodified Nominal Headlines	0	0	0 (0%)	-
	Premodified Nominal Headlines	4	7	11 (2.33%)	(11) Oil spill drill (The Nation Paper, June 9, 2017) (12) The biggest, strangest 'Batteries' (Bangkok Post Paper, June 10, 2017)
Postmodified Nominal Headlines	7	11	18 (3.81%)	(13) Fuji Xerox in digital outsourcing (Bangkok Post Paper 8, 2017)	

Table 1 The result of headline structures in paper newspapers (Cont)

Patterns of Headline Structures	Paper Newspapers		Total (%)	Examples
	The Nation	Bangkok Post		
Nominal				(14) Brazilians in talks to buy The Body Shop (Bangkok Post Paper 10, 2017)
Nominal Headlines with Both Pre/Postmodification	11	11	22 (4.66%)	(15) Venomous jellyfish off Trang, Krabi (The Nation Paper, June 11, 2017) (16) Wishful thinking for justice (Bangkok Post Paper, June 11, 2017)
Coordinated and Appositional Nominal Headlines	2	0	2 (0.42%)	(17) Britain's grace and AMERICA'S DISGRACE (The Nation Paper, June 8, 2017) (18) Obstruction of justice and the long road to impeachment (The Nation Paper, June 10, 2017)
Adverbial				
Prepositional Phrase Headlines	0	0	0 (0%)	-
Adverb Followed by Prepositional Phrase, Infinitive Phrase and Conjunctive Clause	0	0	0 (0%)	-
Noun Phrase as Time Adverbial Headlines	0	0	0 (0%)	-
Total	237	233	470 (99.57%)	

Table 2 The result of headline structures in online newspapers

Patterns of Headline Structures			Online Newspapers		Total (%)	Examples
			The Nation	Bangkok Post		
Verbal	Finite Headlines	Verbal	99	105	204 (55.59%)	(19) NLA gets first look at Bt2.9 trillion budget for 2018 (The Nation Online, June 8, 2017) (20) DMF halts all SorPorKor oil and gas production (Bangkok Post Online, June 8, 2017)
		Omitted Headlines	Auxiliary	40	50	90 (24.52%)
	Non-Finite Headlines	Verbal	2	5	7 (1.91%)	(23) Drilling for oil spill (The Nation Online, June 8, 2017) (24) Riding to the beat (The Nation Online, June 10, 2017)
	Subject+Subject Complement Headlines		6	5	11 (3%)	(25) Path clear for robo- advisers in financial services (The Nation Online, June 9, 2017) (26) JD.com ready to enter Thailand (Bangkok Post Online, June 9, 2017)
	Subject+Locative Adverbial Headlines		1	8	9 (2.45%)	(27) Mazda sales up by 13% last month (The Nation Online, June 9, 2017) (28) Gold prices down B50 to B20,500 (Bangkok Post Online, June 10, 2017)
	Coordinated Verbal Headlines		0	2	2 (0.54%)	(29) India power glut, but 50 million homes left in dark (Bangkok Post Online, June 9, 2017) (30) Corbyn lost UK election, but is still its biggest winner (Bangkok Post Online, June 12, 2017)
	Nominal	Unmodified Nominal Headlines		0	0	0 (0%)

Table 2 The result of headline structures in online newspapers (Cont)

Patterns of Headline Structures	Online Newspapers		Total (%)	Examples
	The Nation	Bangkok Post		
	Premodified Nominal Headlines	0		
Postmodified Nominal Headlines	1	15	16 (4.36%)	(33) Centre of the Northeast (Bangkok Post Online, June 8, 2017) (34) Time to rethink our misguided reform policy on state-owned enterprises (Bangkok Post Online, June 12, 2017)
Nominal Headlines with Both Pre/Postmodification	5	14	19 (5.17%)	(35) Venomous jellyfish off Trang, Krabi (The Nation Online, June 11, 2017) (36) Rare public protest in Shanghai over property rule change (Bangkok Post Online, June 11, 2017)
Coordinated and Appositional Nominal Headlines	0	0	0 (0%)	-
Adverbial Prepositional Phrase Headlines	0	0	0 (0%)	-
Adverb Followed by Prepositional Phrase, Infinitive Phrase and Conjunctional Clause	0	0	0 (0%)	-
Noun Phrase as Time Adverbial Headlines	0	0	0 (0%)	-
Total	154	212	366 (99.72%)	

According to the findings from Table 1 and 2, among the three main types of syntactic structures of headlines proposed by Mardh (1980), the verbal headline type revealed the highest number of headlines investigated in this study (88.35% for paper and 88.01% for online), followed by the nominal headline (11.22% for paper and 11.71% for online). However, not even one of the headlines examined belonged to the type of the adverbial headline, 0% on both paper and online newspapers.

By focusing on the structures from 14 subtypes, the majority of the headline structures on both paper and online platforms was in the subtype of finite verbal headline which covered more than half of all headlines examined in this study (62.08% for paper and 55.59% for online). The second most frequently found structures were the omitted auxiliary headlines (19.92% for paper and 24.52% for online). The third one was the pre/postmodified nominal headline (4.66% for paper and 5.17% for online). From the three subtypes of the most frequently found structures, the first two belonged to the main type of verbal headline while the other was from the nominal headline. With regard to the fact that pre/postmodified nominal headlines were in the third rank, they were, however, far less than the number of the omitted auxiliary headlines which ranked the second.

From the fact that the first two subtypes of the most frequently found headlines belong to the finite verbal and omitted auxiliary headlines which were in the verbal type which had the main structures of sentences, this is similar to the findings from Bonyadi & Samuel (2013), in that they found that the most frequently presented headline structures of Tehran Times were ones with the structures of sentences.

By analyzing the headlines with the finite verbal structure, the tense used the most was the present simple tense. The result is in congruent with certain previous studies such as ones by Chovanec (2003) and Lee (2012) in that most headlines were preferred to be in the present tense. Nevertheless, use of other tenses were still found as in (37) which shows the past tense employed in the headline. Another aspect noticed from some of the target headlines was the presence of auxiliaries as in (38) which shows the contracted form of an auxiliary *will* with a negative word *not* as *won't*. This may be said that it does not follow the norm of headline formation which tends to leave out auxiliaries.

(37) London bridge terror attackers *attempted* to hire 7.5 tonne lorry (Bangkok Post paper, June 11, 2017)

(38) Support for Vietnamese SMEs *won't* be in cash (The Nation paper, June 8, 2017)

Nevertheless, the number of finite verbal headlines with auxiliaries or verbs in other tenses were far less than those of the present simple tense with the percentage of 3.81 for online and 5.08 for paper comparing to those of the simple present tense with the percentage of 51.08 and 57, respectively.

The presence of omission of auxiliaries in this study was in the same way as Moe (2014)'s. Also, in an investigation of syntactic structures of headlines by Lee (2012), omission of auxiliaries was found to be in the top three ranking.

With regard to the nominal or noun phrase headline which was the second type of the most frequently found structure, certain previous studies such as Bonyadi & Samuel (2013) and Lee (2012) also found it, especially Lee (2012) who found it as one of the most frequently appearing structures.

Even though the first three structures of both online and paper newspapers were of the same subtypes, their fourth and fifth most frequently found structures were different. For the online, the fourth and the fifth were the postmodified nominal headline and the subject + subject complement headline. In a reverse manner, the fourth and the fifth structures of the paper were the subject + subject complement headline and the postmodified nominal headline.

From 14 subtypes of the structures, four of them were not found in the target headlines since they revealed 0% of the headline structures of these subtypes. Among the four subtypes, one of them was from the main type of nominal headlines which was unmodified nominal headlines, and the other three were from the main type of adverbial headlines.

Apart from the unfound subtypes previously described, there were certain subtypes of headline structures which occurred in one channel but not the other. The coordinated verbal headline did not appear in paper newspapers while the coordinated and oppositional nominal headline did not appear online.

The reason that the percentage on Table 1 and 2 is not 100 is that there were some headlines which did not follow Mardh (1980)'s structures. Although the

structures presented by Mardh seemed to match almost all target headlines of the present study. There were two paper newspaper and one online newspaper headlines of which their structures did not match with those of Mardh (1980) since they were in the form of noun clauses as in (39) and (40). They were considered 0.27% for online newspapers and 0.42% for paper newspapers. However, two headlines of both online and paper formats of Bangkok Post were identical, as seen in (40). Therefore, it may be said that merely two headlines did not match the mentioned structures, one from The Nation (39) and one from Bangkok Post (40).

(39) Why the letters page might not be an accurate opinion poll (The Nation Paper, June 8, 2017)

(40) Why 1967 wasn't just about the Beatles (Bangkok Post Paper, June 11, 2017) and (Bangkok Post online, June 11, 2017)

Regarding the two sources, The Nation and Bangkok Post, the results revealed that they were in the same manner according to the structures found. They both showed that most of the structures were verbal headlines, and some were from nominal headlines. However, there were no headlines with the adverbial structure found in both sources.

Table 3 Comparison between Platforms

Main Headline Structures	Paper Newspapers (%)	Online Newspapers (%)
Verbal	417 (88.35%)	323 (88.01%)
Nominal	53 (11.22%)	43 (11.71%)
Adverbial	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	470 (99.57%)	366 (99.72%)

As seen in Table 3, regardless of number of headlines, the percentage of the main types of headline structures between the paper newspapers and online newspapers was virtually the same. This could be inferred that platforms did not affect the syntactic structures. In other words, regardless of types of platforms, paper or online, headline makers tend to follow the norm of creating headlines.

Conclusion

From the purpose of the present study which aimed to examine syntactic structures of newspaper headlines in two paper and online newspapers in Thailand.

The results showed that both paper and online newspaper headlines followed the norm of headline formation proposed by experts, at least from Mardh (1980), Saxena (2004), and Semino (2018) in several aspects. That is, most of the headlines employed verbs in present simple tense. Many of them omitted auxiliaries. Besides, there were also headlines with structures of nouns with modifiers. All these findings are useful for English language learners who want to know or understand headline structures which have unique formation since headlines are considerably different from ordinary sentences in a syntactic aspect which make them rather difficult for nonnatives to understand.

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