



Original Research

How headlines communicate: A functional-pragmatic analysis of small-format texts in English-language mass media

by Dmitry S. Khramchenko

Dmitry S. Khramchenko MGIMO University, Russia d.khramchenko@inno.mgimo.ru

Article history Received March 25, 2023 | Revised May 18, 2023 | Accepted June 1, 2023

Conflicts of interest The authors declared no conflicts of interest

Research funding No funding was reported for this research

doi 10.22363/2521-442X-2023-7-2-30-38

For citation Khramchenko, D. S. (2023). How headlines communicate: A functional-pragmatic analysis of small-format texts in English-language mass media. *Training, Language and Culture*, 7(2), 30-38.

Headlines in English-language mass media are a research challenge due to their unique discursive characteristics as small-format texts. Understanding their role as an independent unit of communication between authors and readers is essential for comprehending the nuances of headline construction and interpretation. This paper comprehensively describes major functional-pragmatic properties of headlines within modern media discourse, focusing on the theory of small-format texts. The study intends to answer two research questions: 1. What are the distinctive characteristics of small-format title texts in media discourse? 2. How do small-format texts interact with the primary texts of the publication, affecting their semantics? The paper employs functional-linguistic, stylistic, statistical methods, and discourse analysis to examine a corpus of over 350 headlines randomly selected from British and American press. Informative small-format texts primarily convey the essence of the article, while persuasive small-format texts employ nonlinear discursive means to express pragmatic meanings of indirect persuasion, often utilising puns, irony, humour, and intertextuality. The paper reveals the complex system of pragma-semantic space established by journalists within the overlapping functional fields of both the headline and the primary text of the publication at three interconnected levels: the linear sum of the meaning of lexical units, the nonlinear formation of the semantic space, and the nonlinear hypertextual unity of pragma-semantic spaces between the headline and the article. The paper contributes to a deeper understanding of small-format texts in mass-media discourse, shedding light on their significance in communication and providing insights for media professionals and linguists.

KEYWORDS: *small-format text, functional linguistics, pragmatics, mass media discourse, headline, intellectual play*



This is an open access article distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0), which allows its unrestricted use for non-commercial purposes, subject to attribution. The material can be shared/adapted for non-commercial purposes if you give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.

1. INTRODUCTION

The transformative changes occurring in the language system, speech, communicative attitudes, pragmatic norms, rules of verbal behaviour, and the conceptual sphere as a whole have long been of keen interest to linguists. The rapid development of modern society leads to inevitable shifts in language across various communicative spheres. The discourse of mass media, currently one of the most prevalent and widespread forms of verbal interaction, actively participates in shaping the key cognitive mechanisms in the minds of English speakers. The evolution of this discourse type is reflected in the expansion of the inventory of multilevel means of pragmatic modification of journalistic texts, whose key feature is traditionally recognised not only as informing the audience, but also as creating a special persuasive effect that implements cognitive assumptions for direct and/or indirect impact on the intellectual, emotional, and volitional as-

pects of addressees (Oschepkova & Pivonenkova, 2022; Efimenko & Zurabova, 2022). In this regard, publications in British and American media note a tendency toward purposeful strengthening of imagery and expressiveness, ironic play with described events, and complex manipulation of effective rhetorical techniques.

The headline, preceding the main text of published materials and placing key semantic components in a strong position, plays a special functional role in constructing the functional-pragmatic space of the modern press. The reception of these components provides the necessary vector for further discourse development and realisation of the author's communicative goal. Currently, there are numerous studies dedicated to the lexical-grammatical and structural-semantic features of headlines in various spheres of written English communication. Nevertheless, the constant growth of scientific knowledge in such areas of linguistics as

‘Considering the headline as a tool for pragmatic impact from the perspective of the theory of small-format texts helps to enlarge the ‘two-dimensional’ picture of the language specificity of an important (but, in the eyes of many English language scholars, not primary) structural component, not only of a journalistic text but of media discourse as a whole’

functional linguistics, pragmatics, discourse theory, and cognitive linguistics allows for the development and improvement of the methodological basis by studying familiar objects from a qualitatively new angle, by emphasising different aspects and expanding existing representations with new data. Considering the headline as a tool for pragmatic impact from the perspective of the theory of small-format texts helps to enlarge the ‘two-dimensional’ picture of the language specificity of an important (but, in the eyes of many English language scholars, not primary) structural component, not only of a journalistic text but of media discourse as a whole. This is precisely the goal of this article.

The study aims to address several research questions, which are as follows: (1) What are the distinctive functional-pragmatic characteristics of small-format texts in English-language media discourse? (2) How does the functional load of informative and persuasive small-format texts differ? (3) What are the linguistic features specific to each type of small-format text? (4) How do small-format texts interact with the full texts of the publication, affecting their semantics? The paper addresses a gap in the current research on specific functional and pragmatic properties of small-format texts in English-language media discourse. Despite the significant role of headlines in constructing the functional-pragmatic space of the modern press, there are relatively few studies that specifically examine the discursive traits and functional purposes of these texts from the perspective of the theory of small-format texts. By answering the research questions outlined, the study seeks to enhance our understanding of the impact of small-format texts on the overall meaning and interpretation of media discourse. The paper’s contribution lies in its focus on the specific linguistic and pragmatic features of headlines and their interaction with full texts of the publication.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The study of small-format texts as an object of linguistic research has gained significant attention in recent years. Scholars have noted numerous factors that have contributed to the relevance of this area of research and the sharp increase in the frequency and importance of such texts in everyday and professional communication. These factors include (1) the intensification of information flows that individuals across various types of modern discourse must manage, necessitating the analysis, categorisation, and extraction of essential information in the shortest possible time; (2) the increasing role of written internet communication, including the use of mobile communication devices, which has resulted in relatively small volumes of text messages

being widely accepted as a standard unit of verbal interaction on the world wide web; and (3) the phenomenon of mosaic thinking (i.e. the ability to synthesise patterns from various concepts and perspectives (Sdobnikov, 2021), which is in itself a valuable skill) among communication participants, which demands that content be presented in the most concise yet attractive manner possible to capture interest and encourage further exploration of other texts of greater volume.

The distinctive features of small-format texts, which reflect the main structural-semantic, linguistic-stylistic, and functional-pragmatic characteristics of the considered type of speech products, can be enumerated as follows.

1. Conciseness and relatively small volume. Linguists’ opinions on this issue vary. For instance, Turlova (2019) limits the volume of small-format texts to 50 sentences, while Karpova (2002) indicates a limit of 10-15 lines in the case of a standard compositional structure. Poulimenou et al. (2016) argue that comprehensiveness and readability are fully achieved in short texts consisting of just fourteen words.

2. The author’s pragmatic stance for rapid reading by recipients and simplification of the semantic space through its speech expression, using typical clichés, phrases, genre-conditioned standardised syntactic constructions, and understandable vocabulary for the target audience (such as terminology in small-format texts for specialists in a specific narrow field) (Starostina et al., 2021). The pragmatic stance, or intentional approach to crafting texts (Aijmer, 2005), adopted by the author aims to enhance comprehension and facilitate efficient communication with the intended readership.

3. Formal and semantic compression, assuming a purposeful explication of the minimum set of pragma-semantic components, sufficient for the perception of the author’s broader intention, with a limited range of lexical-syntactic means (Cherkunova & Ponomarenko, 2021).

4. Secondary nature in relation to another, more voluminous text (Remchukova & Apostolidi, 2018). At the same time, a small-format text differs from the associated primary text in its pragmatic orientation and communicative-strategic installations (for example, the primary text aims to inform the reader about some event or a fact of objective reality, while the accompanying small-format text is intended to attract the attention of potential recipients, both interest and intrigue future readers, and form a basic pragmatic space for successful perception of the key components of the semantic system of the primary text).

5. The strong position of the small-format text in relation to the primary text in a number of discursive types determines the author’s use of expressive linguistic means and rhetorical techniques, contributing to active pragmatic influence on recipients.

In contemporary linguistic research, small-format texts under study include educational publication titles in educational discourse (Turlova, 2019; Isajeva & Krivchenko, 2019; Yakovleva, 2022; Kharkovskaya et al., 2017) and EFL exam texts (Malakhova & Kopshukova, 2020), abstracts of scientific articles (Ayers, 2008; Cherkunova, 2021; Golubykh, 2020) and scientific peer-

'A functional-linguistic analysis was used to investigate the linguistic structures of headlines and to identify the syntactic, lexical, and semantic features that contribute to the effectiveness of communication. This method enabled the identification of the communicative functions performed by headlines, such as informative, promotional, persuasive, or evaluative'

reviews (He, 1993), posts on social networks (Purohit et al., 2015), titles of political videos on YouTube (Kharkovskaya & Cherkunova, 2020), author's aphorisms (Lavrova & Gonchar, 2019), poetic titles (Vedeneva et al., 2018), text messages in messengers, email, and computer games (Moreno & Sanabria, 2015), search queries on the Internet (Hua et al., 2015), titles of paintings (Kharkovskaya et al., 2019), and short ads (Inozemtseva, 2013; Malyuga et al., 2020; Morozova, 2022).

The headlines of English-language publications have long been the subject of scrutiny by linguists. However, considering them through the lens of the theory of small-form texts as concise formally and semantically compressed autonomous units of communication within mass media discourse offers insight into the functional-discursive mechanisms that underlie the perception of the journalist's communicative intent, linking the semantic space of the title as an independent but secondary text to the pragmatic-semantic space of the main, primary article. This ensures a systematic perception of media discourse and the realisation of the full spectrum of authorial intentions.

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

3.1. Sample selection

The empirical material was selected using the random sampling method, consisting of over 350 titles of publications on socio-political and economic topics. The selected titles were sourced from popular British and American newspapers and magazines published in 2021–2023, including *The Economist* (print edition only), *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, *The Sunday Times*, and *Newsweek*, among others. These sources were chosen because of their wide readership and significant contribution to shaping public opinion in both Europe and the United States. It is worth noting that headlines in print editions do not always align with headlines in the electronic versions of certain publications, like *The Economist*. This highlights the fact that there can be differences in the way news stories are presented and prioritised between the print and online formats. While the overall content might be the same, the headlines themselves can vary to cater to the specific needs and preferences of each medium. This is also due to factors such as space limitations in print or the desire to optimise online content for search engine visibility and reader engagement. Such disparities in headline presentation between print and electronic media serve as a reminder that news organisations may adapt their strategies to effectively engage with different platforms and target diverse audiences.

The use of headlines in modern communication has made them a crucial component of media discourse, as many consumers of information often only read them and not the texts that follow (Andrews, 2007). This highlights the importance of studying headlines as independent units of communication and autonomous language products.

3.2. Methodological approach

In line with the objectives of this study, relevant methods were selected, including functional-linguistic, discursive, componential, linguistic stylistic, and statistical methods. These methods were used to explore the functional-discursive mechanisms underlying the perception of the journalist's communicative intention and the connection between the semantic space of the headline as a secondary text and the pragmatic-semantic space of the primary text of the article. These mechanisms provide the systematic perception of media discourse and implementation of the full range of authorial intentions.

A functional-linguistic analysis was used to investigate the linguistic structures of headlines and to identify the syntactic, lexical, and semantic features that contribute to the effectiveness of communication. This method enabled the identification of the communicative functions performed by headlines, such as informative, promotional, persuasive, or evaluative. By dissecting the linguistic components of headlines, this analysis shed light on how different discursive elements work together to convey meaning and impact the audience's perception and understanding. The functional-linguistic analysis provided a way to better see the intricate interplay between language structures and the communicative functions of headlines in mass media discourse. The functional-linguistic analysis was conducted using a systematic and structured methodology. A representative sample of headlines was collected from diverse sources, ensuring variation in topics, media outlets, and publication dates. Established linguistic frameworks and theories relevant to headline analysis were employed as the foundation for understanding language structures and their communicative functions. The selected headlines were annotated, with careful examination of syntactic patterns, lexical choices, semantic nuances, and rhetorical devices employed. The communicative functions of each headline were determined, categorising them into informative and persuasive categories based on their intended impact on the audience. Patterns and trends within the sample were identified, focusing on recurring linguistic features, syntactic structures, and semantic strategies that contributed to communication effectiveness. The findings were analysed to uncover insights into the relationship between linguistic structures and the communicative impact of the headlines. This analysis also considered the larger discursive context by comparing the headlines to corresponding articles and evaluating their alignment with broader goals and messaging. The methodology ensured validity and reliability through consistent categorisation criteria and a thorough consideration of potential biases or limitations. The analysis process was carefully documented, including details of the linguistic

frameworks used, annotation process, and categorisation criteria, and the findings were summarised with supporting examples and data, offering a comprehensive and transparent account of the conducted functional-linguistic analysis.

The discourse analysis methodology aimed to comprehensively examine the function of headlines within the broader discursive context of the corresponding articles. To conduct this analysis, a systematic approach was adopted. The selected headlines were analysed to understand how they were strategically constructed to achieve specific discourse goals, including attracting readers, framing issues, and setting the tone for the rest of the article. The analysis involved exploring the interplay between the headlines and the article content, considering how the headlines shaped readers' expectations and influenced their interpretation of the subsequent text. By investigating the discursive strategies employed in headline construction, this analysis provided insights into the ways in which headlines contribute to the overall discourse and communication objectives of the media sources. The methodology facilitated a nuanced understanding of the role of headlines as powerful discourse tools within the broader context of media communication.

A componential analysis was used to identify the component parts (semes) of the headlines' semantics and how they contribute to the overall meaning of the text. This method helped in identifying the semantic roles played by different parts of the headline.

A linguistic stylistic analysis was used to explore the stylistic features of headlines and how they contribute to the effectiveness of communication. This method enabled the identification of the rhetorical devices used by producers of media discourse to construct headlines that are appealing and effective in achieving their communicative goals.

A statistical analysis was used to quantify the frequency of different headline features and to identify patterns of use across different media sources. This method helped in detecting the most common headline pragmatic features used in media discourse. The statistical analysis of the empirical material provides valuable insights into the functional and pragmatic properties of persuasive small-format texts in English mass media discourse, which can be useful for further research in the field of linguistics and communication studies.

3.3. Limitations

Despite the valuable ideas gained from this study, there are several limitations that should be acknowledged. These limitations are important to consider in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the findings and to guide future research in this field.

Firstly, the sample selection process might introduce some biases. While the random sampling method was employed, the sample consisted of titles from a specific set of British and American newspapers and magazines. Therefore, the generalisability of the findings to other media sources or cultural contexts may be limited. Future studies could expand the sample to include a

wider range of publications from different regions and languages to enhance the representativeness of the findings. Secondly, the focus of this study was on socio-political and economic topics. As such, the findings may not fully capture the nuances and characteristics of headlines in other subject areas or domains. It would be beneficial for future research to explore headlines in diverse content domains to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of their functional and pragmatic properties across different contexts. Another limitation pertains to the methodology employed. Although a range of methods was used, including functional-linguistic, discursive, componential, linguistic stylistic, and statistical approaches, there may be other relevant methods that were not considered in this study. Incorporating additional methodologies, such as cognitive or psycholinguistic approaches, could provide further insights into the cognitive processes involved in headline comprehension and the psychological impact on readers. Furthermore, qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, could supplement the findings by exploring readers' interpretations and responses to different headline types. Lastly, the study focused on the English language, and the findings may not necessarily apply to other languages with different linguistic structures and cultural contexts. Cross-linguistic and cross-cultural studies would be beneficial to examine the similarities and differences in headline characteristics across languages and cultures.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of English-language press headlines over the past two decades clearly shows a tendency to deviate from the 'classical' norms of the structural and semantic composition of this important element not only in the text of journalistic articles but also in modern English mass media discourse as a whole. The informational function of the headline remains one of the main ones, as the task and social mission of the mass media are to inform about events, and readers who quickly scan the print or electronic version of the publication can obtain the necessary basic information even before they have opened and read the publication's text. Let's consider the following examples:

Despite the Violent Past and Toxic Present, Britain and Ireland Cannot Escape the Ties that Bind (O'Toole, 2022).

Federal Government's Coronavirus Struggle: When and How to Bring Employees Back to the Office (Rein et al., 2022).

The Drama in No 10 is Riveting but it Needs a Good Ending (Graham, 2022).

Each of the above small-format headline texts represents a brief but meaningful statement with a clear thematic division, which gives an idea not only of the event being described but also expresses a certain evaluativeness. Thus, in the first example, the discursive elements *violent* and *toxic* included in the stating, thematic part of the utterance negatively describe the history of relations and current diplomatic ties between the two countries, adding expressiveness to the negative pragmatics of the text. However, the rheme *cannot escape the ties that bind* in combination with the preposition *despite* leaves hope for the

possibility of resolving long-standing conflicts and disputes if the countries remember the points of contact of their national and cultural interests.

The second small-format text is also a self-contained and coherent statement that is secondary to the main article and is actualised through the lexemes *when* and *how*, which refer hyper-textually to the author's subsequent analysis of the situation. In this case, the communicative goal of the headline is achieved quite successfully: the elements *struggle* and *bring employees back* inform the readership about the serious problem of returning the economy and business life to pre-crisis levels, noting that the US government is currently unable to neutralise the consequences of the pandemic.

The third example demonstrates a headline that requires minimal background knowledge of current news in the UK. The author ironically compares the widely publicised scandal involving Prime Minister Boris Johnson's violation of the country's Covid-19 rules and the possible resignation of the politician to a riveting theatrical drama. The key semantics revolve around the phrase *good ending* at the very end of the small-format text (the statement's theme), conveying to the reader the main idea of the article following the headline: a dramatic story needs a dramatic ending. To fully ascertain whether such a title serves as an opaque hint of the need to remove Boris Johnson from government leadership, readers will have to read the full text of the article.

The quantitative analysis of the empirical material reveals that a significant portion of the small-format headline texts in English media discourse (approximately 28% of the total number of illustrative examples selected for the study) is marked by a shift in the central functional load from simple information and reporting on some event or process towards the pragmatic impact on the addressees (Figure 1). In this case, pragmatic impact refers to the introduction of changes and corrections to the reader's intellectual, emotional, and volitional spheres (Khranchenko, 2018).

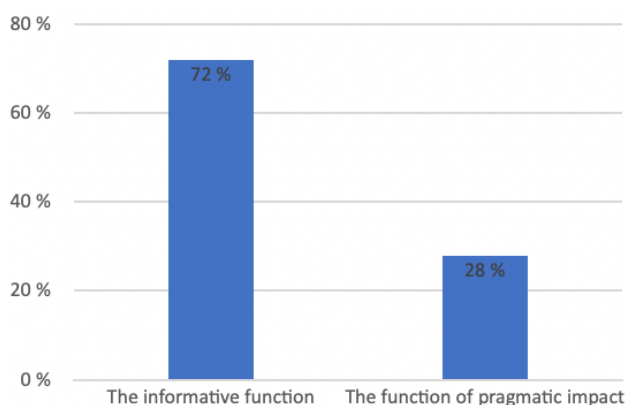


Figure 1. The dominant functional load of the analysed small-format texts

As far as the functional aspect of the pragmatically charged, impactful small-format texts is concerned, headlines may assist the author to achieve the following communicative goals: (1) attracting readers, as titles are often designed to capture the attention of potential readers and entice them to engage with the article; (2) framing issues discussed in the subsequent text, as headlines can shape the readers' perception and interpretation of the article by highlighting specific aspects, emphasising particular viewpoints, or setting the tone for the overall narrative; (3) guiding reading priorities, making specific information or angles within the article look more important and relevant; (4) evoking interest and curiosity, e.g. by employing attention-grabbing techniques, such as provocative statements, intriguing questions, or the use of compelling language, to spark readers' curiosity and motivate them to read further; (5) conveying tone and voice while reflecting the editorial style and branding of a particular media outlet, shaping readers' expectations regarding the article's style, level of formality, or perspective. By fulfilling these functions, persuasive secondary small-format headline texts establish a vital connection with the subsequent primary text, influencing readers' engagement, interpretation, and overall experience with the content, while informative titles only serve as entry points into the publication, facilitating the audience's navigation through mass media discourse by summarising information, providing contextual signposts and initial understanding of the broader context or background of the primary text, referencing relevant events, trends, or key individuals, thus offering readers a starting point for engaging with the subsequent full-length article.

The linguistic features of small-format headline texts allow for the linear and direct realisation of the manipulative and persuasive potential of media discourse, using lexical units with negative evaluative semantics, as well as non-linear and veiled expression, which is less contradictory to journalistic norms of objectivity and allows for the expression of the author's modality in an accessible form. For instance, the article titled *'Prince Andrew Wants Trial by Jury, Despite Being Despised by British People'* (Royston, 2022) on the situation surrounding Prince Andrew, Duke of York, accused of sexual misconduct against a teenage girl, uses the lexeme *despised* with a strongly negative connotative component, and the generalisation *by British people* raises questions about its justification for the reader who has not yet read the article. This directly transmits the evaluative pragmatics of a categorical judgment: all Britons despise the Queen's son for his unforgivable offence. Interestingly, the conspicuous stylistic device of assonance helps intensify the effect (*Price – Andrew – Trial – Jury; Price – Despite – Despise – People*). However, the sharpness of the small-format text is somewhat smoothed out during the familiarisation with the content:

Pollsters YouGov have him on a U.K. net approval rating of -50 – comfortably the lowest of any member of the royal family. Surveys in late 2021 suggested 62 percent disliked him compared to only 12 percent who were supportive while 19 percent said they were neutral (Royston, 2022).

In describing the results of a public opinion poll regarding respondents' attitudes to the Prince's figure, the author uses a stylistically neutral semantic element *disliked* which contrasts with the semantics of the headline. Thus, the secondary small-format text performs a manipulative function in relation to the neutral, from a pragmatic point of view, primary text of the publication.

An example of a non-linear expression of evaluative semantics is an article in *The Economist* about a legal dispute over the refusal of the administration of the city of Boston to hoist the flag of one of the Christian organisations on the City Hall. The article was titled '*Pole Dance*' (*The Economist*, 2022b). A superficial acquaintance with this small-format text may lead to a wrong interpretation of the article's theme, as the linear sum of meanings of two lexical units *pole* and *dance* is intended to evoke in the recipients' minds an image of morally ambiguous pole dancing in a strip club. At the same time, the dissonance between the external, formal structure of the secondary small-format text and the content of the primary text of the publication in relation to it, combined with wordplay and the ability to interpret the lexeme *pole* both as 'a dance pole' and 'a flagpole', generates a special discursive-pragmatic space, in which a negative ironic attitude of the author to the described situation emerges from the depths of the subtext to the surface accessible for perception with minimal analytical efforts. The combination of incompatible functional fields generated by the headline text in explicit and implicit forms contributes to the effect of intellectual play with the reader, who not only enjoys the process of decoding hidden meaning but also perceives the evaluative pragma-semantic components of the journalist's persuasive rhetoric.

The use of intellectual play and allusions to precedent phenomena, which largely determine modern everyday internet communication (Kanashina, 2018), is gradually penetrating the more regulated sphere of English media discourse, becoming an effective way of exerting a pragmatic impact on readers. For example, the article '*Cloud Coup-Coup Land*' (*The Economist*, 2023) informs readers about the recent election in Fiji, where opposition leader Sitiveni Rabuka was sworn in as prime minister, becoming only the third prime minister in the country's history. The previous two prime ministers were ousted in coups in 1987 and 2000. The article text discusses the challenges facing Rabuka, including the country's struggling economy, geopolitical concerns, and the risk of another coup. The play on words in the headline is a reference to the phrase 'Cloud Cuckoo Land', which is an idiomatic expression used to describe a place or situation that is fanciful, unrealistic, or impractical. The term is derived from a play written by the ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes, in which the main character builds a utopian city in the clouds called 'Cloud Cuckoo Land'.

In this context, the journalist is using the phrase *cloud coup-coup land* to suggest that Fiji is a place where coups and political instability are common and even expected, as evidenced by the recent election and the history of previous coups in the country. The use of the word *coup-coup* is a phonetic play on the word 'cuckoo' in the original phrase, emphasising the idea of political

instability and chaos. The headline may also serve as an immediately recognisable reference to a popular novel '*Cloud Cuckoo Land*' by Pulitzer-prize-winning author Anthony Doerr, first published quite recently – in September 2021, which may be regarded as an additional trick to attract the audiences' attention.

Thus, intellectual play refers to the deliberate and skilful manipulation of language, discourse, and cultural references to create a discursive-pragmatic space that engages readers in a process of decoding hidden meanings, while also conveying evaluative pragma-semantic components. It involves employing techniques such as wordplay, allusions, and the combination of incompatible functional fields to generate dissonance and irony, thereby stimulating the reader's analytical and interpretive faculties. Intellectual play encourages readers to engage in a multifaceted exploration of the article's primary text, enabling them to derive pleasure from the act of deciphering complex layers of meaning and appreciate the author's ironic or critical stance towards the subject matter. Furthermore, intellectual play may involve referencing precedent phenomena, drawing upon cultural, historical, or literary sources to enhance the rhetorical impact and persuasive efficacy of mass media discourse. By leveraging these techniques, intellectual play fosters a deeper level of engagement, stimulates critical thinking, and facilitates the transmission of ideas in a creative, thought-provoking manner.

The conducted research has revealed that the non-linear nature of the pragmatic effect of intellectual play is closely intertwined with the author's masterful use of stylistic techniques in the secondary small-format text. These techniques generate a secondary textual layer, imbuing it with implicatures and introducing additional shades of meaning within the otherwise stylistically neutral functional-semantic space. By employing a combination of functional-linguistic, linguistic stylistic, and componential analyses, we are able to discern the presence of intellectual play characteristics in the secondary small-format text of the headline, particularly when considered alongside the primary text of the publication.

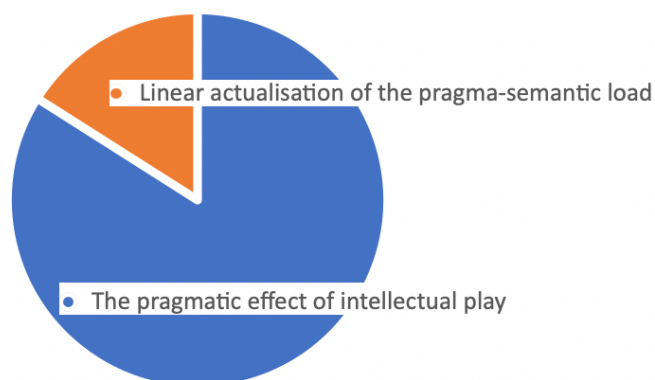


Figure 2. Distribution of impactful small-format texts with pragmatics of intellectual play

'The conducted research has revealed that the non-linear nature of the pragmatic effect of intellectual play is closely intertwined with the author's masterful use of stylistic techniques in the secondary small-format text. These techniques generate a secondary textual layer, imbuing it with implicatures and introducing additional shades of meaning within the otherwise stylistically neutral functional-semantic space'

The quantitative analysis of empirical data shows that 84% of small-format texts with a dominant persuasive function contain features of an intellectual play expressed through a non-linearly actualised pragma-semantic load in the headline (Figure 2). The most popular tools to generate the pragmatic effect of intellectual play turn out to be wordplay (43% of all studied persuasive headlines), irony and humour (56%), the use of intertextual elements (29%), stylistically coloured vocabulary (18%). Many headlines combine several linguistic indicators of intellectual play at the same time.

In the title of the article on the problems of global supply chains, 'Chain Reactions' (The Economist, 2022a), the author uses wordplay to attract attention to the publication, establish a unique connection with the audience, and gain credibility and trust in their journalistic research, which are necessary pragmatic effects of a small-format text. The maximum level of structural and semantic compression, in this case, is compensated by the manipulative potential of the discursive element *chain*, which simultaneously enters both the thematic component of the title – *global supply chain*, fully verbalised in the primary text of the article, and the implicitly rhematic component *chain reaction*, hinting that difficulties in supply chain operations arose suddenly and progressed at an impressively fast pace, much like a chain reaction in an explosion. The fragment of the first paragraph of the article confirms the reader's suspicions and strengthens the effect of the pragmatic impact of irony arising from the overlay of functional spaces of the primary and secondary small-format texts:

The general public learned far more about supply chains last year than it probably cared to. A host of disruptions to production and shipping interacted with soaring demand for goods to produce bare shelves and rising prices. Although goods have been in short supply, the number of measures tracking supply-chain woes has proliferated at an impressive pace in recent months. All paint a picture of historically high levels of disruptions, and an uncertain path ahead (The Economist, 2022a).

The discursive elements *soaring*, *proliferated*, *impressive pace*, *historically high levels*, and *an uncertain path ahead* correlate with the multi-layered semantics of the headline, uniting both texts into a single impactful space.

As the empirical analysis shows, one effective technique for creating an ironic and impactful headline is the use of intertextuality. An article about the growing popularity of otters as household pets in Asian countries and the development of a black

market for wild animals has the headline 'Some Like It Otter' (The Economist, 2022c). The allusion to the well-known Hollywood movie 'Some Like It Hot' does not add additional semantic components to the pragmatic-semantic system of the secondary small-format text taken separately from the primary text. However, the combination of the wordplay *otter* vs. *hot* and the easily recognisable intertextual reference not only attracts attention to the article but also contributes to creating the pragmatics of humour, which also serves a phatic function.

The interaction of recipients with the functional-semantic space of the publication allows them to perceive the author's communicative intention at a deeper, conceptual level. A fragment from the very beginning of the article describes otters exclusively as cute and charming animals:

Otters are cute, this no one can deny. They have big eyes and snub snouts and paws like tiny little hands. They look even cuter when they wear jaunty hats and toss food pellets into their mouths as if they were bar snacks, like Takechiyo, a pet otter in Japan. Documenting Takechiyo's antics has earned his owner nearly 230,000 followers on Instagram, a photo-sharing app (The Economist, 2022c).

However, in the very last paragraph, the author effectively does not recommend keeping otters at home for a number of unpleasant reasons:

In any case, otters do not even make particularly good pets. Every year the Jakarta Animal Aid Network, a charity in Indonesia's capital, receives some ten otters from people who have struggled to look after them. Faizul Duha, the founder of an Indonesian otter-owners' group, admits that his two animals emit a 'very specific' (read: fishy) smell. They bite humans and gnaw at furniture. Their screeching can be heard blocks away. And their cages need cleaning every two to three hours. That is how often they evacuate their bowels (The Economist, 2022c).

Similar to the characters in the film 'Some Like It Hot' (men dressed as women), otters as domestic pets are not as wonderful creatures as they may seem at first glance.

Thus, the semantic load of the persuasive secondary small-format text is revealed differently on three interconnected levels of readers' reception:

(1) the level of the linear combination of the sum of meanings of lexical units included in the small-format text abstracted from the primary text;

(2) the level of the nonlinear formation of the semantic space of the secondary small-format text abstracted from the primary text;

(3) the level of the implementation of the hypertextual unity of the pragmatic-semantic spaces of the secondary small-format and primary texts, united by thematic progression, a single complex of propositions, complementary functional load, and a common potential for pragmatic impact.

In conclusion, while this study sheds light on the functional and pragmatic properties of informative and persuasive headlines in English mass media discourse, it is important to recognise the limitations outlined above. Addressing these limitations in

future research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of headline communication and its impact on readers in diverse contexts.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrates that applying the theory of small-format texts to the investigation of linguistic features of headlines in modern English-language press expands existing knowledge about this structural component of journalistic texts and embeds it within the contemporary cognitive-discursive paradigm. The small-format text of a headline represents a full-fledged autonomous product of modern media discourse, a separate unit of communication between the author and the reading audience. The secondary nature of small-format texts makes it possible to form a complex and comprehensive system of pragmatic-semantic space at the intersection of the functional fields of the headline and the primary text of the publication. This system reveals, complements, and adjusts the initial semantics available for the reception during quick acquaintance of the reader with the content of the printed or online version of the edition. From the perspective of the functional-pragmatic approach, small-format texts of media discourse can be divided into two groups: headlines with a dominant informative function (disting-

guished by a lower degree of semantic and structural compression, formally expressed by a clear theme-rheme division) and titles primarily realising the function of exerting pragmatic impact (high degree of structural and semantic compression, nonlinearity of discursive means of expressing manipulative and persuasive pragmatic values, a key role of hypertextual links between secondary and primary speech products as the basis for the cognitive-discursive mechanism of transmitting key pragmatic elements of evaluativity and modality, which are directly related to the modification of the dynamically developing information picture of the world for readers and laying the groundwork for understanding events, phenomena, and specific personalities in a certain light in accordance with the communicative goal of the discourse producer).

The most common non-linear discursive means that implement the effect of intellectual play with the reader and, accordingly, the impact function of the small-format text of a headline are wordplay, irony, humour, and intertextual elements. The results of the present study indicate the need for a further, more detailed exploratory examination of the headline as both an independent speech product and an auxiliary rhetorical tool for adding supplemental meanings during the unfolding of media discourse content.

References

- Aijmer, K. (2005). Evaluation and pragmatic markers. In E. Tognini-Bonelli, & G. D. L. Camiciotti (Eds.), *Strategies in academic discourse* (pp. 83-96). John Benjamins.
- Andrews, B. C. (2007). Media-generated shortcuts: Do newspaper headlines present another roadblock for low-information rationality? *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 12(2), 24-43. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1081180X07299795>
- Ayers G. (2008). The evolutionary nature of genre: An investigation of the short texts accompanying research articles in the scientific journal *Nature*. *English for Specific Purposes*, 27(1), 22-41. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2007.06.002>
- Cherkunova, M. V. (2021). Means of semantic compression in modern English scientific discourse (based on abstracts to the articles from international scientific citation databases). *Professional Discourse & Communication*, 3(3), 28-38. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24833/2687-0126-2021-3-3-28-38>
- Cherkunova, M. V., & Ponomarenko, E. V. (2021). Mini-texts of English web-literature in the context of contemporary digital discourse: System-dynamic approach. *Vestnik of Samara University. History, Pedagogics, Philology*, 27(4), 168-175.
- Efimenko, T. N., Zurabova, L. R. (2022). Linguistic interpretation of advertisements in media discourse. *Bulletin of the Moscow Region State University. Series: Linguistics*, 2, 6-16. <https://dx.doi.org/10.18384/2310-712X-2022-2-6-16>
- Golubykh, A. A. (2020). Linguo-pragmatic parameters of the English medical scientific minitexts. *Vestnik of Samara University. History, Pedagogics, Philology*, 26(2), 112-120.
- Graham, J. (2022, January 19). The drama in No 10 is riveting but it needs a good ending. *The Times*. <https://thetimes.co.uk/article/boris-johnson-dominic-cummings-pork-pie-plot-james-graham-vzw9cxzk0>
- He, A. W. (1993). Language use in peer review texts. *Language in Society*, 22, 403-420.
- Hua, W., Wang, Z., Wang, H., Zheng, K., & Zhou, X. (2015, April 13-17). Short text understanding through lexical-semantic analysis. (2015). In *Proceedings of the 31st International Conference on Data Engineering* (pp. 495-506). IEEE.
- Inozemtseva, N. V. (2013). Discourse characteristics of the English-speaking advertising realtor announcement small format texts (ESARA SFT). *International Scientific Research Journal*, 8(15), 101-103.
- Isajeva, O. N., & Krivchenko, I. B. (2019). Functional characteristics of title mini-texts in educational discourse (by the material of American course books on civil law. *Philological Sciences. Issues of Theory and Practice*, 12(9), 234-238.
- Kanashina, S. V. (2018). Internet meme and precedent phenomenon. *TSPU Bulletin*, 4, 122-127. <https://dx.doi.org/10.23951/1609-624X-2018-4-122-127>
- Karpova, E. V. (2002). *Politeness strategies in modern English: On the material of small texts* [Doctoral dissertation, Gerzen Russian State Pedagogical University]. Russian State Library. <https://search.rsl.ru/ru/record/01002311326?ysclid=llhp01yxtv359635446>
- Kharkovskaya, A. A., & Cherkunova, M. V. (2020). Minitexts in American media-discourse (based on the titles of Youtube videos featuring Donald Trump). *Current Issues in Philology and Pedagogical Linguistics*, 4, 44-51. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2902/5/2079-6021-2020-4-44-51>
- Kharkovskaya, A. A., Kuznetsova, L. V., & Makhuha, V. S. (2019). Art discourse revisited: Linguocultural specifics of childhood-related art tokens. *Training, Language and Culture*, 3(1), 23-36. <https://dx.doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.1.2>

- Kharkovskaya, A. A., Ponomarenko, E. V., & Radyuk, A. V. (2017). Minitexts in modern educational discourse: Functions and trends. *Training, Language and Culture*, 1(1), 62-76. <https://doi.org/10.29366/2017tlc.1.1.4>
- Khranchenko, D. S. (2018, November 12-14). Teaching synergy of pragmatic impact in modern English discourse. In *Proceedings of the 11th International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation ICERI2018* (pp. 8939-8942). IATED. <https://dx.doi.org/10.21125/iceri.2018.0647>
- Lavrova, S. Yu., & Gonchar, A. A. (2019). Small-format text in discursive practice: Functionality of the author's formula. *Bulletin of the Cherepovets State University*, 3(90), 72-80. <https://dx.doi.org/10.23859/1994-0637-2019-3-90-8>
- Malakhova, V., & Kopshukova, E. (2020). Linguo-pragmatic potential of creolized texts in online international EFL exams. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 88, Article 01013. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20208801013>
- Malyuga, E. N., Ponomarenko, E. V., & Minayeva, A. A. (2020). Stylistic devices as means of forming discursive features of advertising minitexts (exemplified by English economic and political media sources). *Vestnik of Samara University. History, Pedagogics, Philology*, 26(4), 82-87. <https://dx.doi.org/10.18287/2542-0445-2020-26-4-82-87>
- Moreno, J., & Sanabria, L. (2015). Analysis of short non-literary texts: Elements for a conceptual approach to the mini-text. *Enunciación*, 20(1), 68-77. <https://dx.doi.org/10.14483/udistrital.jour.enunc.2015.1.a05>
- Morozova, E. S. (2022). Features of small-format text advertising. *Proceedings of the State Agricultural Academy of Velikie Luki*, 2, 62-68. https://dx.doi.org/10.56323/23088583_2022_02_62
- Oschepkova, V. V., & Pivonenkova, T. B. (2022). Manipulative tactics used in the 'Opinion' section of The Guardian web-portal. *Bulletin of the Moscow Region State University. Series: Linguistics*, 4, 91-101. <https://dx.doi.org/10.18384/2310-712X-2022-4-91-101>
- O'Toole, F. (2022, January 23). Despite the violent past and toxic present, Britain and Ireland cannot escape the ties that bind. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jan/23/half-a-century-after-the-horror-of-bloody-sunday-britain-and-ireland-are-still-seeking-peace>
- Poulimenou, S., Stamou, S., Papavlasopoulos, S., & Poulos, M. (2016). Short text coherence hypothesis. *Journal of Quantitative Linguistics*, 23, 191-210. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09296174.2016.1142328>
- Purohit, H., Dong, G., Shalin, V., Thirunarayan, K., & Sheth, A. (2015, December). Intent classification of short-text on social media. In *Proceedings of the 2015 SmartCity International Conference* (pp. 222-228). IEEE. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1109/SmartCity.2015.75>
- Rein, L., Duncan, I., & Horton, A. (2022, January 23). Federal government's coronavirus struggle: When and how to bring employees back to the office. *The Washington Post*. https://washingtonpost.com/politics/federal-workers-coronavirus/2022/01/22/74f530ba-78ad-11ec-9102-d65488c31bb1_story.html
- Remchukova, E. N., & Apostolidi, A. A. (2018). Small-format 'mews flow' media texts in the focus of linguistics: Genre and language peculiarities. *RUDN Journal of Language Studies, Semiotics and Semantics*, 9(3), 651-668. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22363/2313-2299-2018-9-3-651-668>
- Royston, J. (2022, January 27). Prince Andrew wants trial by jury, despite being despised by British people. *The Newsweek*. <https://newsweek.com/prince-andrew-wants-trial-jury-despise-d-british-people-jeffrey-epstein-ghislaine-maxwell-1673441>
- Sdobnikov, V. V. (2021). New tasks of translation teachers: The challenge of mosaic thinking. *Professional Discourse & Communication*, 3(2), 43-54. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24833/2687-0126-2021-3-2-43-54>
- Starostina, J. S., Cherkunova, M. V., & Kharkovskaya, A. A. (2021). Education and city in the English-language small-format texts: Axiological approach. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 98, Article 04013. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1051/SHSCONF/20219804013>
- The Economist. (2022a, January 20). Chain reactions. *The Economist*. <https://economist.com/finance-and-economics/2022/01/22/just-how-gummed-up-are-supply-chains>
- The Economist. (2022b, January 20). Pole dance. *The Economist*. <https://economist.com/united-states/2022/01/22/the-supreme-court-looks-askance-at-bostons-refusal-to-fly-a-christian-flag>
- The Economist. (2022c, January 13). Some like it otter. *The Economist*. <https://economist.com/asia/2022/01/13/demand-for-pet-otters-is-driving-a-harmful-trade>
- The Economist. (2023, January 7). Cloud coup-coup land. *The Economist*. <https://economist.com/asia/2023/01/05/a-historic-transfer-of-power-in-the-south-pacific>
- Turlova, E. V. (2019). *Pragmalinguistic characteristics of small format texts* [Doctoral dissertation, Volga State Social and Humanitarian Academy]. Russian State Library. <https://search.rsl.ru/ru/record/01003473034?ysclid=llhp0ex73kc433865463>
- Vedeneva, Yu. V., Kharkovskaya, A. A., & Malakhova, V. L. (2018). Minitexts of poetic titles as markers of the English cognitive paradigm. *Training, Language and Culture*, 2(2), 26-39. <https://dx.doi.org/10.29366/2018tlc.2.2.2>
- Yakovleva, E. V. (2022). Realization of situational cognitive models in English educational discourse. *Vestnik of Samara University. History, Pedagogics, Philology*, 28(3), 161-167. <https://doi.org/10.18287/2542-0445-2022-28-3-161-167>