

A Study of Idioms Used in Newspaper Front Page Headlines

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to look for the use of idioms in different Pakistani newspaper headlines of front page. For the conduct of this comparative study a mixed approach was used to collect the data. Purposive sampling was done. Front page headlines of three different Pakistani newspapers containing idioms were shortlisted and the frequency of the use of idioms in a particular use was analyzed. Quantitative research was used to analyze data. It was seen that the idiom of Power and Authority was used at large in Political and Local news, whereas other type of idioms were used less.

Keywords: Idioms, Expression, Newspaper, Headlines etc

1. Introduction

All around the world, especially in developing countries, print media has been of great significance for giving information to the public. Its basic purpose is to make people familiarize with the latest events and trends in society. It discusses any currently initiated movements or their outcomes and any possible political, social, economic, or academic changes which may affect everyday life of the citizens. In a country like Pakistan, where English enjoys the status of a second language, newspaper serves the additional purpose of improving English language skills of the second language learners. The most popular readership of the English newspapers include graduate and post graduate students who want to enhance their reading and writing proficiency in English

A variety of news can be found in Pakistani English newspapers. The most popular way practiced to read all of the news in a short available time is to have a look at the headlines on the front page. The front pages display the most important information and news stories of the day (Bowles and Borden, 1997:189). Hence, headlines, more specifically front page headlines, are the most effective source of getting readers' attention. Headlines have a special structure. They use short, concise expressions and also contain idioms, phrases and titles. They usually appear in the form of a dependent clause, phrase or a clause with some omitted words. This mostly causes ambiguity and vagueness in the delivery of actual information. Hence, the readers must be familiar with the differentiated structure of newspaper headlines, for example idioms, phrases, unusual grammatical structure etc. so that they may fully and correctly grasp the provided information in less time.

The present paper analyzes and describes different types of idioms in front page headlines of Pakistani English newspapers, so that the reader may be familiarized with all types of idiomatic expressions to enhance their understanding of the headline news. An idiom can be defined as an expression that conveys a meaning not exactly what it literally refers to. Moreover, idioms have context-specific meanings which vary from culture to culture depending upon the common points of reference set within a particular culture.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Headline Definitions and Concepts

According to Duff and Shindler (1986), headlines mostly become visible as a short text which set up the readers for the news stories and influence them to go through the news articles and purchase the newspaper. Duff and Shindler also highlight that a headline should be direct to help the readers read and understand it rapidly.

Bowles and Borden (1997:189) clarify that headlines are one of the major elements in the outline and format of a newspaper. They recommend that the size and the arrangement of headline demonstrate the significance of the news stories and make the front page appealing. For example, the captions of important news always appear in huge, bold letters. Bowles and Borden also lay emphasis on the headlines that must be true in terms of presenting the facts of the news stories. Therefore, it is important for the sub-editor to understand the news stories before writing headlines. According to Hodgson (1998:125), headline writing is an exceptionally troublesome job for subeditors. The sub-editor has to focus on the most essential event of the story and deliver it into a few words that would attract the readers to read on. Hodgson defines headline as having two main functions. Firstly, it gains the reader's attention towards the news stories. This function deals with the selection of words that are used in the headline. The sub-editor blends and filters the words so that the headline turns into "a simple read me message". Secondly, the headline shapes a part of the visual outline of the page. Normally, on a news page, the news stories are divided by the sizes of headline type. The important most stories are on the top of the page and usually in huge letters. It is the sub-editor's job to have room for the words to suit the news stories as well as the boundaries allotted to each news story. Also, the headline language is similar to everyday

language as people usually use small words when they speak.

However, headline construction is not like everyday speech. Hodgson says 'headline construction is deliberately composed as a metrical poem since it pares down to the bone'. This means that, the writer uses few words, which are key words to express all that he wants to convey to the readers and this causes headlines to become alien to ordinary speech. Barraclough and Boonyavatana (1999:6) state that daily papers are a business because they intend to make profit by selling more papers. Appealing front-page headlines convince the customers to buy newspapers. Other than attracting customers to read the news stories by proposing that the stories contain information which he may find appealing, each headline tells the main news and the basic details, which allow the readers to appreciate the important idea even when they skim through the page.

According to the aforementioned, the headline plays an important role in the newspaper because it tells the main theme of the stories as well as appeals the readers to read the news stories and to buy the newspaper. To write interesting headlines, the words in each headline must be short having clarity and impact. In other words, the words should clearly express what the writer wants to say and be strong enough to convince the readers to read the news stories; however, headlines must be precise too.

2.2 Idiomatic Expression Conceptualisation

According to many linguists, idiomatic expression is a poly-lexemic expression whose meaning cannot be concluded from the meaning of its parts, despite the fact that this extensive definition is based on popular examples. The speaker has a random link between the idiomatic expression and its non-literal meaning, when learning a new idiomatic expression. Following this thought, Swinney and Cutler (1979), suggested the lexical representation model, according to which the idiomatic expressions were stored and retrieved when required in a similar way to long words. This idea gave the view that the syntactic behavior of idiomatic expressions was related to the idiomatic meaning in an immediate manner.

According to Fraser (1970), an idiomatic expression is "a component for which semantic explanation is not a compositional function of the formatives from which it is created". In addition, the meaning of such expression cannot be obtained from lexical knowledge of its component words. No matter how much the elements an idiom is made of adds to its meaning, a continuum of semantic compositionality from transparent to opaque idioms can be expected (Numberg, Sag & Wasow, 1994). In addition, Fraser (1970) proposed that idiomatic expressions can be arranged into a 'frozenness hierarchy' varying from expressions that capable of going through almost all grammatical transformations without losing their figurative meaning to idiomatic expressions that are unable to go through even the simplest transformation without losing their meaning.

As far as the syntactic properties of idiomatic expressions are concerned, they are peculiar for their inflexibility, that means that certain changes to the components of an idiomatic expression can remove its non-compositional meaning (Culicover, 1976; Van Riemsdijk & Williams, 1986; Napoli, 1993)

Idiomatic expressions are one of the most frequent forms of figurative language (Gibbs, 1999). One characteristic of idioms is their ease as whole expressions: which means that their implication cannot be predicted, or at least entirely predicted, on the basis of information of the independent conventions that agree on the use of their constituents when they appear in isolation from one another (Numberg, Sag, & Wasow, 1994).

To put it together, an informal expression is a gathering of words which, all in all, has a unitary/non-literal implying that is not quite the same as the dictionary meanings of the individual words. Henceforth, the importance of the informal expression is not the entirety of literal meanings of the words taken independently. Likewise most idiomatic expressions have a solid social foundation. Numerous idiomatic expressions reflect clear living custom, esteem judgments, thinking behavior thus on. So, understanding idiomatic expressions can be considered as perception of a sort of society.

2.3 The Use of Informal Language, Idioms and Headline Words in Headlines

Hodgson (1998:126) notice that 'headline language is near today's dialect as far as straightforwardness and promptness'. Headlines may utilize some talked language, for example, idioms and informal words. Harris and Spark (1997:82) call attention to that idiomatic language can be utilized the length of it is important to the subject and event and it passes on the intending to the pursuers. Be that as it may, the utilization of idioms and informal words is useful for works for just a specific gathering of individuals. From this, it appears that idioms and informal words ought to be used just where the readers and the scholars have the same social foundation. The utilization of idioms and informal language in English language headlines is by all accounts an issue for readers who are non-local speakers of English. Aside from the idioms and informal language, headline words appear to be routinely used as a part of headlines. Headline words are short words, the vast majority of which are not utilized as a part of regular life. Each has an extraordinary importance, which is used every now and again as a part of news coverage.

To put it plainly, a decision of words, for example, idioms, informal words and headline words is additionally an element that stands out as truly newsworthy significant to the readers. It appears that the social

and educational backgrounds of the readers are likewise figures that the sub-editor ought to consider before composing headlines. He/she should consider who he/she is writing for and what he/she is writing on. Harris and Spark express that newspaper language ought to be straightforward and understandable for individuals from various educational backgrounds and societies.

2.4 Types of Idioms

As expressed in the "Worldwide Dictionary of Idioms" by Cambridge University Press, idioms are a bright and interesting part of English. They are generally utilized as a part of a wide range of language, casual and formal, spoken and written. What's more, idioms generally have a more forceful meaning than non-idiomatic expressions. Idiomatic sayings may likewise recommend a specific state of mind of the individual utilizing them. The Dictionary of Idioms incorporates the implications of expressions, as well as cases in light of sentences from the Cambridge International Corpus. Altogether, there are fifteen types of idioms recognized as 'theme panels' appearing towards the end of the dictionary as takes after:

1. Anger
2. Business
3. Dishonesty
4. Happiness and Sadness
5. Health
6. Helping
7. Intelligence and Stupidity
8. Interest and Boredom
9. Liking and Not Liking
10. Money
11. Power and Authority
12. Remembering and Forgetting
13. Speaking and Conversation
14. Success and Failure Understanding

2.5 Research Questions

1. What is the idiom types found in Pakistani Newspapers?
2. What are the types of news in which idiomatic expressions are used?
3. What relative differences exist in idiomatic expressions used in different Pakistani newspapers?

3. Methodology

In order to explore the types of idioms used in front page Pakistani newspaper headlines, a mixed approach of study was employed. Purposive sampling technique was used to select sample headlines. The idiomatic expressions were initially located and identified through qualitative methods. Later, the comparative frequency of different types of idiomatic expressions was calculated quantitatively.

3.1 Sampling

The study used purposive sampling procedure. In order to identify types of idioms and their existing frequency in different Pakistani English newspapers, the front page headlines of three newspapers: the Dawn, The Nation and The Express Tribune were examined. The data were collected only from two months' front page headlines of all three newspapers, i.e. January and February 2016.

3.2 Procedure

Idiomatic expressions used in each of the three newspapers were separately identified. Then their types were explored. The following table was used to locate and identify the type of idioms and news type in front pages headlines of The Dawn, The Nation and Express Tribune:

Table1: Types of Idioms used in Front Page Headlines

No.	Date	Headline	Type of Idiom	Meaning	Type of News

Later, a comparison was drawn between frequencies of each type of idioms used in the three newspapers. A comparison was also drawn regarding which type of news (political, social, international etc.) frequently appears in newspapers headlines containing idioms. The findings were displayed in the form a table. The result has been discussed and conclusion has been drawn accordingly.

3.3 Discussion and Analysis

We have collected the idioms used in the headlines of three different Pakistani newspapers named as The Nation, The Express Tribune and Dawn News. We have gathered data of two months i.e., January-February 2016. For the verification of idioms and their types, the International Dictionary of Idioms by Cambridge and Chambers Idioms by E.M. Kirkpatrick and C.M. Schwarz have been used.

According to our findings, in the Newspaper 'The Nation' it has been seen that 19 idioms were used in two months. Idioms of Helping, Speaking and Conversation, Power and Authority, Anger, Money, Business, and Success and Failure have been used in 'The Nation'. The type of news which was found in 'The Nation' are World news, Political and Local. It has been seen that the type of idioms which was found at large is Power and Authority. Helping and Speaking and Conversation idioms has been used twice, whereas Power and Authority idioms has been used seven times, Money and business, Success and Failure idioms has been used once and the idioms of Anger has been used thrice. In types it has been seen that Political news type occurred eleven times whereas World news occurred thrice and Local news came five times.

According to our findings, in the Newspaper 'The Express Tribune' it has been observed that 30 idioms were used in two months. Idioms of Happiness and Sadness, Understanding, Helping, Speaking and Conversation, Power and Authority, Anger, Money, Business, and Success and Failure have been used in 'The Express Tribune'. The type of news which was found in 'The Express Tribune' are World news, Sports, Political and Local. It has been seen that the type of idioms which was found at large is Power and Authority. Speaking and Conversation idioms has been used four times, Happiness and Sadness idioms has been used thrice, Business and Understanding idioms has been used only once. In types it has been seen that Political news type occurred eleven times whereas World news appeared thrice, Sports news appeared once and Local news occurred fourteen times.

According to our findings, in the Newspaper 'Dawn News', it has been found that 18 idioms were used in two months. Idioms of Helping, Speaking and Conversation, Power and Authority, Anger, Business, linking and not liking and Success and Failure have been used in 'Dawn News' The type of news which was found in 'Dawn News' are World news, Political and Local. It has been seen that the type of idioms which was found at large is Power and Authority. Power and Authority has been used eleven times, Speaking and Conversation, Helping, Liking and not Liking and Business idioms have been used once, Success and Failure idioms have been used twice. In types it has been seen that Political news type occurred nine times whereas World news appeared twice, and Local news occurred eight times.

According to Bowles and Borden, 1997, the front pages display the most important information and news stories of the day and idioms help them to convey their message vividly. Barraclough and Boonyavatana (1999:6) state that daily papers are a business because they intend to make profit by selling more papers, similar has been seen through our result that the idiom of Power and Authority was used at large in all our sample newspapers instead of other idioms. By using the idiom of Power and Authority, news becomes prominent and has a dominant appeal. It was also seen that the idioms of Dishonesty, Health, Intelligence and Stupidity, Interest and Boredom, and Remembering and Forgetting were not found at all. An idiom gives a different sort of crisp to news and helps the reader to understand it better. Newspaper headlines help the reader to choose the type of news which best suit their interest and any headline containing idioms facilitate the reader in the same manner. Sports news was found very lessen on the front page whereas Political news was found the most. Use of idioms was also found in the Local news in all sample newspapers as well. It was found that Political, Local, World news usually contain Idioms in all our sample newspapers.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that all our three sample newspapers (The Nation, The Express News and Dawn News) use idioms in their headlines of front page. Use of idioms makes news precisely interesting and meaningful to retain the interest of the reader. It makes a headline more catchy and appealing. It was seen that the idiom of Power and Authority was used at large in Political and Local news, whereas other type of idioms were used less.

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Table 1: The Nation (January 2016- February 2016)

No.	Date	Headline	Type of Idiom	Meaning	Type of News
1.	9 January	Top civil-military brass for extending all-out help to Delhi	Helping	High-ranking military or civilian officers, With all one's strength, ability, or resources	World
2.	15 January	PM calls APC today to iron out differences on CPEC	Speaking and Conversation	To solve all problems that are still left	Political
3.	19 January	Pakistan for early end to KSA-Iran standoff	Power and Authority	To stay at a distance	World/ Political
4.	23 January	Terror wave puts question mark on NAP execution	Power and Authority	Moment or period of time.	Political
5.	23 January	Nisar under fire in Senate for 'false statement' on Maulana Aziz	Anger	Being criticized	Political
6.	29 January	Nisar breaks silence by shelling PPP	Anger	To unfold rapidly,	Political
7.	31 January	Less than expected cut in POL prices	Money	To slice something; To gouge something.	Local
8.	5 February	Govt shelves plan to privatize power firms	Power and Authority	Put aside temporarily; postponed.	Local
9.	9 February	PIA flights gains thrust	Power and Authority	To get or attain something, to drive or push through something forcefully.	Local
10.	14 February	Deadly Kotli clash triggers Centre- AJK war of words	Power and Authority	Extreme or terrible, to wage a battle or attack against someone or something, to cause someone to become angry	Political
11.	19 February	NAB chief throws Chaudhry-like challenge at Sharif	Anger	To use power or authority	Political
12.	20 February	Pakistan lifts sanctions on Iran	Business	To take something away.	World/ Political
13.	21 February	Court issues non-bail able warrants for Musharraf	Power and Authority	To compel a decision	Political
14.	25 February	Zarb-e-Azb final phase set in motion	Success and Failure	To begin	Local
15.	25 February	CCI to decide census issues , NA told	Speaking and Conversation	To focus directly on the essential or core matter(s) of a given topic or issue.	Political
16.	29 February	Will go to any length to finish terrorists: COAS	Power and Authority	To do whatever is necessary, to destroy or completely defeat someone or something	Local
17.	29 February	PML-N moves to soothe opponents of Women Protection Act	Helping	To make someone or something shift toward something	Political

Table 2: The express tribune (January 2016- February 2016)

18.	1 January	Senate throw spanners in works of PIA's sell off	Power and Authority	To get rid of something,	political
19.	4January	13 killed as van overturn catches fire	Happiness and Sadness	To begin to burn, usually after being touched by an existing fire	local
20.	5 January	Touch down in Colombo	Speaking and Conversation	to make contact with ground	political
21.	6 January	Aziz fails to clear up ambiguity in stance	Understanding	to explain something; to solve a mystery	political
22.	10 January	Nawaz promises to bring out the truth	Speaking and Conversation	to issue something; to publish something; to present something [to the public]	Political
23.	10January	January 15 talks still on track says Aziz	Speaking and Conversation	on schedule; progressing as planned	Political
24.	10 January	29 killed as US steps up drone strike	Power and Authority	To increase	Political
25.	11 January	Khattak ask PM to clear the area or else....	Power and Authority	to explain something that someone disagreed with or did not understand	Political
26.	18 January	Fear of sectarian fallout prompted mediation: officials	Power and Authority	The results of something; the flak from something.	Political
27.	22 January	Kabul asked to help nailed mastermind	Helping	to arrest someone	political
28.	22 January	Police narrow down the list of facilitators	Power and Authority	To reduce a list of possibilities from many to a selected few.	local
29.	22 January	Tax amnesty :PIA sell-off bills bulldozed through	Power and Authority	To get rid of something,	local
30.	24 January	Five facilitators nailed	Success and Failure	To reduce a list of possibilities from many to a selected few.	local
31.	30 January	Steel mills told to lay off daily wage-earner	Money	to stop doing or using something	local
32.	30 January	Hunt for PIA strategic partner put on hold	Power and Authority	to postpone something; to stop the progress of something	Local
33.	1 February	Terrorism stems from a specific mindset all over	Power and Authority	In every way	World
34.	5 February	Pakistan's indigenous T20 league kicks off	Happiness and Sadness	To start	Sports
35.	6 February	Late night meeting fails to break deadlock	Speaking and Conversation	To score the first goal	Political
36.	6 February	How a Pakistani girl ended up in arms of Da'ish	Power and Authority	To eventually do to a set of events	World
37.	6 February	For census only a quarter of troops needed available	Helping	Quarter to	Local
38.	9 February	PIA staff, govt. stick to their guns	Power and Authority	Refuse to change one's belief	Local
40.	9 February	K-P Governor Sardar Mehtab steps down	Success and Failure	To resign	Political
41.	10 February	WB Chief pushes Pakistan to keep up momentum	Power and Authority	To stay even or ahead	Political
42.	10 February	Smartphones can help a great deal in empowering women	Business	Very much	World
43.	14 February	The express tribune staffer meets sudden death	Happiness and Sadness	To die	Local
44.	20 February	One thing that doesn't abide by the majority rule is conscience	Success and Failure	To remain faithful to	Local
45.	21 February	Courts can shoot down anti-people laws	Power and Authority	To criticize a request	Local
46.	25 February	Jhagra to step into Mehtab's Shoes in K-P	Power and Authority	To take someone's place	Local
47.	27 February	PM orders speeding up Karachi operation	Power and Authority	To make something go faster	Local
48.	28 February	Census back in sight as GHQ assures more troops	Power and Authority	Betting from French hazard	Local

Table 3: Dawn News (January 2016- February 2016)

49.	9 January	Nandipur power turning out to be most expensive	Business	To prove To convince	Local
50.	11 January	'COAS green lighted NAB action in FHA Valley scam'	Power and Authority	Permission to go ahead, Approval	Local
51.	14 January	Jaish's Masood Azhar reportedly taken into custody	Power and Authority	To include, To notice	Political
52.	25 January	Islamabad abiding by accord, Kabul not violating it: PM	Power and Authority	To remain faithful	World/ Political
53.	28 January	Army to go all out for peace in Karachi	Helping	Ending its innings	Local
54.	2 February	Centre, Sindh bury hatchet over Ranger's powers	Power and Authority	To reach an argument	Political
55.	4 February	SC set aside Ludhianvi's victory	Power and Authority	To declare something invalid	Local
56.	5 February	PIA strike: Govt vows not to back down in face of protests	Power and Authority	Take a less aggressive condition	Local
57.	6 February	Efforts under way to defuse PIA crisis	Success and Failure	Not anchored	Local
58.	7 February	IB to brief senators on 'spy signals' aimed at PM Secretariat	Power and Authority	To intend or achieve	Political
59.	16 February	Indian envoy holds out hope for talks revival	Speaking and Conversation	To set something aside	World
60.	17 February	Lawmakers drag out skeletons from the past	Power and Authority	To extend	Political
61.	18 February	NAB ' falls in line ' after PM's criticism	Power and Authority	To submit to rules of higher authority	Political
62.	19 February	Supra-commission to check 'misuse of power' by NAB on the cards	Power and Authority	Likely to occur	Local
63.	20 February	Punjab IG calls on army officers	Power and Authority	To correct To summon	Political
64.	24 February	BKU inquiry glosses over police role	Liking and not Liking	To treat something with less care than it deserves	Political
65.	25 February	Opposition, deputy speaker bury the hatchet	Power and Authority	To stop fighting or arguing	Political
66.	29 February	COAS vows to wipe out all terrorist hideouts	Success and Failure	To crash or fall over	Local