

USE OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN TITLES AND HEADLINES

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Summary: The title or the headline is certainly language of a particular type not only grammatically and typographically (such as size and style of printing, layout, use of colour) but also stylistically. It catches the eye and commands attention. Moreover, a PU appearing in a title or a headline attracts by its figurative meaning and image. It brings the idea of the text to the fore, making it more prominent. The reader is offered a conclusion or is invited to draw one. An interesting area of research is the striking and innovative use of proverbs in the headlines of texts of advertisements, where much emphasis is achieved by “creative headlines which act as major attention-getters” (Mieder 1989: 293).

Key words: Umbrella use, to join the bandwagon, the Wild West, stiff upper lip, sitting on the fence, multimodal use, Home Truths, Bee in a bonnet.

Umbrella use:

By umbrella use I understand use of PUs in titles and headlines performing a sustainable cohesive text-embracing function. Umbrella use is a comprehensive term. It refers to and covers the whole of the text, which comes under the general unifying influence of the PU.

In umbrella use the PU is a general cover, lending an overtone which runs throughout the text. At the same time it is like an undercurrent that helps to determine its overall stylistic quality. Different techniques in umbrella use reflect a variety of phraseological cohesion and sustainability. The main types of umbrella use are as follows.

To join the bandwagon:

The PU may certainly appear at any point of the text, though usually it is reiterated at the beginning of the text in the first paragraphs, or one of the first, working for figurative links in discourse. For instance, the headline *Slow to join the bandwagon* is core use, and the PU is repeated in the first sentence of the first paragraph with insertion of two instantial constituents. Reiteration of the PU in an instantial form echoes the PU, modifying and specifying the thought expressed in the headline:

Switzerland, one of Europe's richest countries, has been rather slow to join the P r I v a t e e q u I t y bandwagon.

Financial Times, 2 December, 1999, p. IX

The Wild West:

Instantial use in headlines is a favourite pattern for media journalists. It lends a subtle additional meaning to the whole of the text. In the following example the PU the Wild West has undergone instantial replacement coupled with extended metaphor to meet the needs of an article headlined Ta m I n g the Wild E a s t :

As the best westerns all make perfectly clear, the real drama in the Wild West was not about guns, or whiskey, or courage, but money, and the making of it. Today in the R u s s I a n Wild E a s t , little has changed. Boris Yeltsin is Burt Lancaster, though more corpulent, the brutal but admirable cattle baron, determined to carve an empire from t h e w I l d e r n e s s .

The Spectator, 22 August, 1998, p. 7

Stiff upper lip:

Let me turn to another headline Can t h e stiff upper lip survive? The article focuses on new attitudes and a new corporate British identity. The instantial form is a metonymic personification of the PU to keep/show a stiff upper lip, which is a metonymy-based metaphor in its base form. The insight the instantial use affords is supported by a photo of two English ladies of the Victorian era in profile, having tea and keeping a stiff upper lip (a visual pun) and by reiteration of the PU in an elliptical form further in the text:

To keep/show a stiff upper lip

The English language is full of phrases attesting to the British sense of reserve and decorum – stiff upper lip, fair play, it's not cricket. And the response to a crisis, in this mythology, is to go away and have a nice cup of tea.

The Times, 7 July, 1998, p. 17

Sitting on the fence:

Sitting on the fence can harm your health is the headline of an article in Travel Weekly (22 March, 1999, p. 14). The main idea of the article is that independents need to re-evaluate their position in the travel industry. While the title is in core use,

the summary, coming straight after the headline, is instantial use. It repeats the PU sustaining the metaphor: “So g e t o f f t h a t fence and show the agents who support us exactly how much we appreciate them”. The article discusses the urgency of the issue and the PU is repeated in the last sentence: “You can no longer sit on the fence because you’ll die”. The frame construction is a compositional technique that emphasises the theme, shaping a context.

Multimodal use:

The multimodal approach involving the whole text is representative of newspaper language. In general “texts in English are becoming increasingly multimodal: they use devices from more than one semiotic mode” of representation at the same time (Goodman 1996: 39). Creating meaning in a multimodal text involves a complex interaction of visual elements and verbal English presented to the eye, as well as contextual and background knowledge (op. cit.: 69).

Home Truths:

The headline Home Truths (Weekend Financial Times, 23/24 October, 1999, p. XI) is a PU in core use. The PU is polysemous, and in this text it is used in its second meaning which is less common: a statement of undisputed fact.³³ The article, which is devoted to an exhibition, contains interior design drawings for a home. This use is multimodal. The PU in the headline fulfils an umbrella function: the whole article turns into a pun dealing with the design of home products, supported by the visual effect.

Bee in a bonnet:

The article Bee in a bonnet (The Guardian, 27 October, 1999, pp. 12–13) refers to new measures to disguise GM food and the issue of a drop in sales for bee farmers if the public suspects that nectar is contaminated with GM pollen. The proposed legislation aims to legitimise the 1% threshold for GM material contamination in food which is seen as an idea one cannot stop talking about and which is not shared by others. The whole article is the context for instantiation of the PU to have a bee in one’s bonnet (CCDI 1995: 25) working as a pun. The visual representation of a bee gathering nectar brings up the literal meaning of the constituent. The photo is placed in the second half of the article, making the reader return to the PU in the headline and reinterpret its message. The headline would have been incomprehensible without an understanding of the pun both visually and verbally.

THE LIST OF USED LITERATURE:

1. For a graphical presentation of the main types of phraseological cohesion and sustainability in umbrella use, see Appendix VI.
2. Moon points out the significance of idioms in the text-initial or paragraph-initial, as well as the text-final or paragraph-final positions (1998: 297–300).
3. For discourse analysis of J. Fowles' short story *The Ebony Tower*, see Short (1995: 45–62).
4. An ivory tower – studies, interests (esp. academic or artistic) that cut one off from the realities and struggles of life; observation and imagination in place of direct experience (Cowie, Mackin and McCaig [1993] 1994b: 323).
5. MWCD 1996 gives two meanings of the PU home truth: (1) an unpleasant fact that jars the sensibilities; (2) a statement of undisputed fact.