Linguistic Analysis in Newspapers

Dr. Appala Raju Korada
Asst. Professor of English, Jazan University, K.S.A.
Dr. C.R.S. Sarma
Professor of Linguistics, Andhra University, India

Abstract

Mass media play a significant role in the development of modern culture by being agents of public awareness and potential catalysts of social change and further, shapers of public opinion in matters of national importance. Mass media are the hallmarks of ан enlightened and progressive society.

Keywords: Telegraph, Newspapers, Journalism, Inverted Pyramid style, Linguistic dimension, and Stylistic dimension.

Introduction

Mass media play a significant role in the development of modern culture by being agents of public awareness and potential catalysts of social change and further, shapers of public opinion in matters of national importance. Mass media are the hallmarks of an enlightened and progressive society.

Today mass media include newspapers, radio, and television as the main categories. Of these, newspapers happen to be the first mass medium to appear. The first newspapers appeared in Germany in 1609. Most of the early newspapers were strictly regulated by the government, and hence did not report local news or popular events. However, at the time of outbreak of civil war in 1641 in England, the common people eagerly looked forward to reading about the major events of the war in the newspapers. This prompted John Milton to produce his famous treatise Areopagitica, in which he fervently appealed for the freedom of press. The impact of this treatise was so profound that the newspapers were freed from government control and newspapers began to flourish and diversify into various formats. The newspapers acquired a new format of headlines with embellished illustrations. Yet, the headlines tended to be somewhat lengthy and verbose.

With the advent of the telegraph, the time lag between the time of happening of an event and the time of reporting it was considerably reduced. Further, there was an increased level of competition between the newspapers. The increased pace and competition led to brevity and precision, which led to a change of format of headlines. Gradually, the newspapers turned to objective journalism, in which the facts of the events mattered and nothing else. In due course, the newspapers evolved the so called Inverted Pyramid style, in which the most fundamental facts are stated in the headlines briefly and the other details are stated in the succeeding paragraphs.

Winkler (2014:47) states that successful headlines have one or more of the following five elements:

a) Surprise
b) What's at stake
c) Names that make news
d) Conflict
e) Conflict resolution

It is not necessary that every headline must have all of these five elements, but it is essential that every headline must have at least one of them. Winkler warns that a headline with none of these elements risks having the fewest readers.

The purpose of a headline is to attract the readers' attention in as much brief period as possible. It should entice the reader into reading the main story. The best headlines are often precise, clear, graceful, and catchy. Writing about the magic of headlines, Panneerselvan states that the requirements of a headline are accuracy, intelligibility, and vigor. He is of the opinion that 'headline writing exemplifies the craft of journalism.it is a unique blend of science and art'. He explains that a headline is science in content, facts, and accuracy, and sums up that 'an elegant, factually correct headline attracts more readers to a particular story'.

In the present paper, our aim is to study the headlines in Telugu newspapers with reference to the characteristic features discussed above. No particular newspaper has been selected exclusively for the study, since the general trend of headlines in all Telugu newspapers is much the same. We also wish to point out that the headlines in Telugu newspapers do not resemble the headlines in English newspapers. The headlines in Telugu newspapers and the headlines in English newspapers differ with respect to a few minor features, as follows:

English headlines	Telugu headlines
1.Verbs in simple tenses are used.	1.Verbs are rarely used.
2.Passive structures are often used with auxiliary verbs dropped.	2.Passive structures are never used
3.Often use infinitives	3.Nominalized structures are very common.
4.Pun usually derives from lexical ambiguity.	4. Pun is usually achieved through graphic devices like highlighting, use of inverted commas
5. Slang is often avoided	5. Slang may be used
6. Dialectal words are not common.	6. Dialectal words are common.

Headlines are, in a sense, summaries of the news stories that follow them. This practice is offshoot of the Inverted Pyramid style journalism, in which the most important information appears at the top as the headline and in the lead paragraph. The additional information and facts are provided in the subsequent paragraphs, and the least important information comes toward the end of the story. Over the years, the headline writing has indeed become an art, and a science too, as pointed out by Panneerselvan.

Irrespective of the language, headlines in every language certain structural principles, viz.,   a) Brevity b) clarity c) catchiness. Linguistically, the headlines may vary from language to language.

The headlines in Telugu newspapers may be analyzed along two dimensions:

a) Linguistic dimension
b) Stylistic dimension

Linguistic dimension

Along the Linguistic dimension, the headlines may be categorized in to several types as follows:

A. Concatenation of nouns
B. Nominalized structures
C. Parallel structures
D. Finite verb structures
E. Use of loan words
F. Foregrounded structures
G. Use of nonfinite structures

Stylistic dimension

Along the stylistic dimension, the headlines may be categorized in to the following types:

A. Use of pun by quotation marks and by lexical ambiguity
B. Rhyming structures
C. Use of figures of speech

D. Use of mythological epithets
E. Use of rhetoric questions

In the following pages, the above categories will be discussed with examples of headlines. This categorization is not exhaustive because each situation demands a different type of headline from the journalist. We must keep in mind that the primary motivating force in writing headlines is creativity coupled with catchiness. At the same time, the headline cannot be verbose.

Linguistic dimension

1. Concatenation of nouns:

Sometimes, two or more nouns are put together to form a headline. These nouns may show varies types of case relations, and hence may carry a case marker on one of the nouns to show the casal relation.

e.g.: -

a) Beachlu bangaru batule (బీచ్ లు బంగారు బాతులే)

'Beaches are golden ducks'

In this headline, there are three nouns, one of which *bangaru* functions as an adjective to the following noun, *batulu.* In fact, beaches are metaphorically equated with golden ducks.

The identicalness of beaches and golden ducks is emphasized with the emphatic marker 'e'.

b) prangana niyamakaala mandagamanam (ప్రాంగణ నియామకాల మందగమనం)

'slow progress of campus recruitment'

2. Nominalized structures

Probably, nominalized structures are the most prolific of all the headlines. In this kind of headline, the verb is relativized and is placed before the subject or object. This structure sums up the whole sentence.

e.g.: -

a) Adugantina charitra (అడుగంటిన చరిత్ర)

'the history which hit the bottom'

This headline narrates the sad tale of Srisailam Dam, which recorded the lowest storage of water in several years. This situation, called Dead storage, means the water level is almost at the bottom of the reservoir. The journalist recalls that Srisailam Reservoir had a glorious history of catering to the needs of lakhs of acres. All of this is summarized in this headline.

b) panniru posina palani (పన్నీరు పోసిన పలని)

'Palani who sprinkled rose water'

This headline tells us about the events in Tamilnadu politics. In the ruling AIADMK party, after the demise of the former Chief Minister Jayalalitha, two strong contenders, Palani Swamy and Pannir Selvam, for the post of Chief Minister emerged. In Telugu, the word panniru also means 'rose water'. Recently these two contenders arrived at a consensus and joined hands. This happy ending of the political drama is captured by the journalist by making use of pun on the word *panniru*.

1. Parallel structures:
A parallel structure has two parts, both of which are identically structured, and have approximately the same number of syllables. This headline is best suited when the headline reports a dilemma.
e.g.: -
a) Ammakaalu diilaa…aadaayam elaa (అమ్మకాలు డీలా..... ఆదాయం ఎలా)
        'sales are dull… income how'
This headline narrates the situation of the Power distribution companies in Andhra Pradesh. The metered sales of power to the industries has come down in the recent months, and hence the power distribution companies are facing heavy losses. This predicament is captured by this parallel structure.
b) kuravani vaana…peragani saagu (కురవని వాన ..... పెరగని సాగు)
        'did not rain…cultivation did not increase'
In parallel structures, the two parts of the headline are of equal syllabic weight and balance each other. In this headline, the fact that there have been no rains in spite of its being rainy season, and consequently the cultivation did not increase. The sad plight of the farmers is clearly brought out by this headline.

1. Finite verb structures:
Compared to the other kinds of headlines, especially nominalized structures and concatenation of nouns, finite verb structures are less frequent. Yet, Finite verb structures this structure is preferred when reporting a crucial statement by an important person, or when reporting a heart-rending incident.
e.g.: -
 a) Preminchanante champesaadu (ప్రేమించనంటే చంపేసాడు)
        '(he) killed when (she) said not loving'
This headline narrates a heart-rending incident of one-sided love which not only failed, but ended tragically. It is reported that a boy loved a girl, who did not reciprocate his love. But the boy kept pestering her to accept his love. When the boy heard that the girl was engaged to another boy, he became enraged and stabbed her and her brother to death and committed suicide. In the entire incident, the most important points are that it is a case of one sided

love, and the boy could not take it in his stride and turned in to a beast. The whole tragedy is captured by this headline.

b) votetone khatam cheyaali (ఓటుతోనే ఖతం చెయ్యాలి)

    'finish (him) by vote'

In a constituency bye-elections are being held and in the extreme heat generated by the poll, one politician remarked that the other politician deserves to be shot dead. In reply, the other politician retorted that the politician who made that remark must be finished by voting against him. Here, the second politician also retorted that his opponent must be finished, but politically. This important statement is summed up in this headline.

2. Use of loan words:

Telugu borrows extensively from English and Hindi. Such borrowed words are very frequently used in headlines. Sometimes some of these borrowed words may not be intelligible or may not be popularly known to the readers. Yet, the newspapers used such words in the headlines.

e.g.: -

a) company khallas (కంపెనీ ఖల్లాస్)

    'company is finished'

This headline tells us about a company which is making losses and about to become insolvent. To indicate the impending insolvency of the company, the writer of the headline uses an Urdu word, which is totally unfamiliar to the readers. In fact, the readers can only understand what the word 'khallas' means only from the context and from the rest of the story. Yet, the journalist uses this word because he is familiar with it.

b) Pathakaalapai mukhyamantri nazar (పథకాలపై ముఖ్యమంత్రి నజార్)

    'Chief Minister's attention on programmes'

The governments in India, periodically, announce a number of welfare programmes and allot huge funds for the implementation of those programmes. Sometimes, the funds are likely to be embezzled by unscrupulous officials. To stop this, the Chief Ministers turn their attention, from time to time, to the programmes and oversee their implementation. The Urdu word 'nazar' means 'view, overview, attention'. But this Urdu word could have been avoided because it is not known to many Telugu speakers. Instead, the corresponding Telugu word 'Drishti' could have been used.

3. Foregrounded structures:

In a foregrounded structure the normal word order SOV is altered, and sometimes the complements may be brought forward. Any item that is placed initially gains importance and is in focus.

e.g.: -

a) Ennikala kosame kaapulato aatmiiya samaavesam (ఎన్నికలకోసమే కాపులతో ఆత్మీయ సమావేశం)

  'for the sake of elections with kaapus cordial meeting'

The normal word order of this construction would have been *kaapulato aatmiiya samaavesam* ennikala *kosame.* But the message given here is that the meeting is only for the sake of elections and is not genuinely motivated. Hence, to highlight this the phrase ennikala *kosame* is foregrounded.

b) ADgaa chesindi 17 rojule (ఎ.డి. గా చెసింది ౧౭ రోజులే)

  'as AD(assistant director) having worked only 17 days'

A corrupt official worked in the capacity of Assistant Director only for 17 days, but in the short duration, he embezzled crores of government funds. Here the finite verb *chesaadu* is nominalized and brought forward to highlight it.

7. Use of nonfinite structures:

This is not a very common practice. Non-finite verbs are used without any following finite verb as a headline. Normally this short of headline appears when some exciting thing happens and if the journalist feels a finite structure would not be able to express the excitement.

e.g.: -

a) Kuppakuulchi…danchikotti (కుప్పకూల్చి ... దంచికొట్టి)

  'having collapsed… having beaten'

This headline tries to capture all the excitement when the Indian team defeated the Srilanka team in the recently held one-day match. The Indian team not only bowled well and collapsed the Srilanka team, but also batted well to win the game. A finite structure would not have expressed the excitement, and hence, the non-finite structure is used.

II. Stylistic dimension

1. Use of pun by quotation marks and by lexical ambiguity:

The Telugu newspapers are fond of using this type of headline. A particular word, or a portion of the word is either put within quotation marks, or highlighted by using a distinct color. The word as a whole, or a part of it may convey some other meaning which may be relevant to the news story at hand. Sometimes this relation is transparent, but sometimes it is far-fetched.

e.g.: -

a) choriilanu *aap*taam (చోరీలను ఆపుతాం)

  'thefts will be stopped'

The news story reports that the police department of Andhra Pradesh developed a computer application (aap) to stop thefts. Incidentally, the Telugu word 'aapu' means 'to stop', which is similar to the abbreviation *aap*. Hence,

aap is used instead of 'aapu' to imply that it is the *aap* that is meant. But unless readers go in to the story, this is not clear. However, the word *aap* is highlighted in red color to make it clear.

b)'sikka' mudi padindi (సిక్కా ముడి పడింది)

    'tight knot happened'

This headline indicates the crisis in Infosys, as a result of its CEO, Vishal Sikka, resigning to his post. The surname Sikka resembles the Telugu word *chikku* 'tight, hard', only partially. But Telugu newspapers never miss an opportunity to make use of pun, however far-fetched it may be. In this case, unless the readers know that Vishal's surname is Sikka, the pun is not transparent to them.

2. Rhyming structures:

Rhyming structures are also a favorite type of headline for Telugu newspapers. This includes not only rhyme but also alliteration and assonance.

e.g.: -

a) saanukuulam…saamarasyam (సానుకూలం ... సామరస్యం)

    'favourable…amicable'

After the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, a number of post-bifurcation problems remain to be solved. The Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana together met the Governor to find a solution for the problems. In the meeting, they decided to solve the problems favourably and amicably. Since the essence of the meeting is to resolve all problems favourably and amicably, that is chosen as the headline. Here the beginnings of the two words are similar, which is known as alliteration.

b) uppu ruupam…apuruupam (ఉప్పు రూపం ... అపురూపం)

    'shape of salt… rare'

The largest crystal model of the arrangement of atoms in sodium chloride has been made by an Austrian scientist and is put on display in Hyderabad. This headline is a caption below the photo of the crystal model. The morph *ruupam* is repeated at the end of both words and is a rhyme.

3. Use of figures of speech:

Often Telugu newspapers make use of a number of figures of speech like simile and metaphor, drawing the figures of speech from mythology.

e.g.: -

a) vaarini mingindii 'blue whale' bhuutame (వారిని మింగింది 'బ్లూ వేల్' బూతమే)

    'it is the blue whale demon that swallowed them (killed them)'

Recently, an online game called Blue Whale is instigating the teenagers to commit suicide. The news story reports two more such deaths and attributes them to the online game, comparing the Blue Whale game to a demon and using the relevant verb *mingu* 'to swallow'. The figure of speech used here is a metaphor.

b) malachukunte swargadhaamaale (మలచుకుంటే స్వర్గధామాలే)

      'if moulded properly, virtually heavens'

Andhra Pradesh has a long sea coast. Along the sea coast, there are a number of beaches, and if they are properly equipped and moulded, they turn in to virtual heavens and attract hundreds of visitors. Here the beaches in Andhra Pradesh are metaphorized to heavens.

4. Use of mythological epithets:

It is very common thing for Telugu newspapers to draw examples from Indian mythology and customs.

e.g.: -

a) satamaanam ikigaay (శతమానం ఇకిగాయ్)

      'hundred years for work'

The Japanese word *ikigaay* means the purpose of life. It is reported that for most Japanese, their motto and purpose of life is to keep working. It is this work culture that increases their long life. Most Japanese live for hundred years and more. The Telugu word *satamaanam* is a traditional Hindu blessing to live for a hundred years. In this headline, the Indian expression *satamaanam* is used to indicate the long life of Japanese.

b) jaatiiya parvadinaana kiichaka parvam (జాతీయ పర్వదినాన కీచక పర్వం)

      the act of Kichaka on the festive occasion of Independence day'

Kichaka was a character in Mahabharata, who tried to molest Draupadi, when she was in Viratanagara incognito. On 15th of August when a school girl was going to her school in Chandigarh, a criminal-minded person abducted the girl and molested her. Anybody who does this kind of act is referred to as Kichaka in Indian context.

5. Use of rhetoric questions:

Rhetoric questions are not information seeking questions. The person who asks a rhetoric question either knows the answer, or wants to accuse the other person of negligence. In political speeches we often notice such questions.

e.g.: -

a) udyoga prakatanala uusedii (ఉద్యోగ ప్రకటనల ఊసేది)

      'where is the mention of job recruitment notices?'.

There is a going dissatisfaction among the unemployed people because the government, having made a promise of jobs to everyone, has so far not issued any job recruitment notice. This headline is intended to accuse the government of turning a deaf ear to the demands of the unemployed people.

b) vittanam pai eedii chittam (విత్తనం పై ఏది చిత్తం)

      'where is the attention on seeds?'

The Andhra Pradesh Government seed corporation is not able to supply good seeds that can sprout. The seeds bought from the private agencies are not genuine and the farmers are incurring losses on account of such seeds. This headline asks a rhetoric question, accusing the government of negligence in this regard.

References

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