

LINGUISTICS

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*Academician of the Russian Academy
of Natural Sciences, Peoples' Friendship University
of Russia, Doctor of Philology,
Full Professor, Chair of the foreign
languages department
of the faculty of economics
e-mail: en_malyuga@hotmail.com*

Ye. N. Malyuga¹

FUNCTIONAL AND PRAGMATIC CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERROGATIVE SENTENCES IN ECONOMIC DISCOURSE HEADLINE COMPLEXES IN BRITISH AND AMERICAN NATIONAL VARIANTS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The paper analyzes the problems connected with the functioning of interrogative sentences in headline complexes of the economic discourse in British and American national variants. The results of the research show that the functional-and pragmatic features of interrogative sentences are characterized by a very noticeable contrast in headline complexes of the economic discourse in British and American national variants.

Key words: interrogative sentences, headline complex, economic discourse, functional-and pragmatic approach.

The functional and pragmatic approach to studying interrogative sentences in economic discourse headline complexes in British and American national variants of the English language has enabled us to analyse not only the form of communicating the message and its intention but also the aim of its communication.

The relevance of this problem analysis is determined by growing interest in studying interrogative questions in headline complexes which contain “one of the most notable recent phenomena having a social basis and reflecting changes in public life – economic discourse” [1, p. 131].

Pragmatics considers language regarding its usage, i.e. in terms of human activity as it (from Greek *pragmatos* – “action, activity”) deals with language units’ functioning in speech; consequently, its task is to reveal the speaker’s conditions and objectives. Pragmatics is directly related to studying speech activity, its mechanisms and social factors of speech acts. Pragmatics embraces studying language in terms of social, cultural and cognitive aspects.

A great number of works of both Russian and foreign linguists are devoted to various fields of linguistic pragmatics (O.V. Aleksandrova, V.Z. Demyankov, E.V. Paducheva, Pocheptsov, G. G. Grice, R. Stalnaker, T. A. Van Dijk, etc.) [2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8].

The focal point of pragmatics as a category of semiotics is the speaker’s personality. Studies of linguistic pragmatics regard communication participants as parts of a social group, with their social and individual psychological characteristics, knowledge and world views.

The pragmatic component encourages communicants to use those language structures which seem most appropriate to convey his/her communicative intentions and correspond to specific communicative environment. The communicants’ relations reflect various models of people’s social relations in general. Communicative means at any level of functioning are also determined by social factors [9].

It is a matter of common knowledge, the functional and pragmatic approach assumes regarding language as a system of human communication. We view language as a tool of people’s verbal interaction.

From the point of view of the functional and pragmatic approach, it is vitally important to study language in the context of various types of speech activity and types of constructions used there.

Functional analysis takes into account informative text features as language units of the text may concretise their meanings or acquire new shades of meaning under the influence of the context.

The functional analysis also considers the socio-cultural aspect of textual speech units, as the same notions may be perceived differently by different culture bearers [10].

Thus, it is important to study utterances of economic discourse participants in the light of the functional and pragmatic approach as communicants' intentions are expressed there.

It is also worth mentioning that studying the opportunities of expression and functioning of interrogative sentences in headline complexes is interesting from the point of view of sentence semantics and communicative grammar since they carry information about the environment which is meant for being conveyed in the process of communication and is used by communicants in their practical and cognitive activity.

We regard a headline complex of a text within the economic discourse structure as "an inherent communicative unit positioned before the text, being its title, having a syntactic structure, directly or indirectly suggesting the content and differentiating one speech unit from another" [11, p. 13].

The headline complexes of our study include headlines, subheadings and microcontext of articles.

In the process of studying interrogative questions in headlines and subheadings of economic discourse in articles of such comparable print issues as *The Financial Times* and *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, we have pointed out a communicative leader (the author of the article) who possesses information corresponding to the situation of communication and is capable of communicating it to the reader. The author is communicatively linked to the reader, conveying him/her the message. Such communicative link corresponds to the linguistic model "addressee-message-code-addresser".

The position of headline complexes in the article turns the chosen utterance into a verbal action. The pragmatic direction of media text headlines is expressed in interrelation with the information recipient.

In the process of speech activity, the tendency to interpenetration and interweaving of the nominative and pragmatic sides of an utterance which, unlike a sentence, is characterised by the corresponding communicative and pragmatic features, is retained [12, p. 96-97].

It is the mass media which may in the first place be considered an effective indicator of language trends and a tool for influence on recipients. Economic discourse is widely represented in the media in informative and analytical genres in the form of various reviews and analytical articles. We have observed a limited number of interrogative forms in the above mentioned print issues. This determines the greater interest in their functional capacity, therefore, the main theoretical background of this article is the idea of a social nature of language as the most vital means of communication, its social differentiation and variability related to its functioning and development.

A text's headline and subheading represent part of a hyper-phrasal unity, its functional and notional features being manifested in complex. According to E.A. Lazareva, a headline complex is a subsystem within a textual system which comprises beyond-textual elements such as headlines, subheadings, lead-ins, inserts, announcements. These elements are united by a common topical content at the same time being structurally independent. A newspaper headline as such can hardly be regarded as an independent notional unit. It interacts with other components of textual organisation. Our study also assumes microcontext as part of a headline complex.

For instance, the combination of the following headline and subheading strikes the reader by its paradoxicality and uncommonness, thus performing the appealing function:

«*Would I rather be Henry VIII ?*» or «*Do you want to be a fish?*»

Subheadings following the headlines perform the informative function and briefly convey the content of the article.

The headline «*Would I rather be Henry VIII ?*» is followed by a subheading «*It's a stupid question — almost as silly as the way we measure inflation and economic growth*».

It is the informative function that differentiates headlines of British articles from American: «*The American century: Is it going or coming?*», «*New President?*» (From The WSJE, 2007).

Such headlines determine an article's character.

The question “New President?” is presented as a subheading and is evasively answered («it's possible») after which comes a detailed analysis of the company chief's work. A key feature of this article is its laconism. Wordplay is very typical of the British national variant of English (“to beat or not to beat”, “two beers or not two beers”) as it encourages demonstration of erudition meant for the reader. When it comes to linguistic means used in economic discourse, Englishpeople appear to be more aesthetic than Americans.

As for the relation of headlines, subheadings and microcontext of articles in British and American economic discourse, it should be noted that in a separately taken article they are united by a common notional nucleus. Interrogative sentences in a prominent position may play the role of subheadings, sometimes even headlines.

For instance, in the article from The Financial Times the author asks an explicit question and gives a recommendation (though in a somewhat evasive form).

The challenge for the ECB

Central bankers do not like surprises. European policymakers had been looking forward to a comfortable launch of the euro next January. When 11 countries including Italy signed up for the single currency in May, the talk was of a European boom, not a global recession. ...

Nevertheless, the change in world conditions has prompted US central bankers to contemplate easing monetary policy. *Should their counterparts in Europe do the same?* The answer is: not yet.

European central bankers are unlikely to cut rates in anticipation of imported deflation or to offset falling equity markets (From «F.T.», 2008).

A comparatively small size of the article assumes absence of a subheading. The headline is unambiguous, the only expressive word in this brief headline being the word “challenge”. If we analyse other articles in this paper, we shall make similar observations: the content of such headlines is transparent, e.g.:

Analysts see sharp falls in metal supplies; Equities take a beating but fight back from lows; SWX (the Swiss exchange) to open office in London; VW (Volkswagen) dismisses speculation over trucks takeover; Murdoch steps down at Star TV and so on.

He pleads for cash

He, the United Nations «governor», yesterday made an emotional appeal for more money, police and diplomatic help to restore public services, law and order in the beleaguered province.

The governor also excoriated the international community for sending him only 1,800 police officers when he had asked for 6,000. Referring to the murder rate, he told ministers of NATO and its Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC): «Don't talk to me about law and order until you send me more police. I can't do this with my bare hands».

One can hardly determine the aim of the article without the headline. But the subheading explicitly determines the content. From this viewpoint, the article appears to have two headlines which makes the necessity of the second (less definite) headline questionable. But the exchange of the headline and subheading positions will result in a common relation of quite an unclear and thus attracting the reader's attention headline and a subheading concretising it.

The interrogative sentence contains *implication – indignation* and sounds dramatic, i.e. no answer is required. Therefore, it represents an already expressed requirement in a more emotional interrogative form. One can not ignore the interrogative element of this sentence: *what about you*

conscience? Thus, there are both explication for those not quite informed and implication – encouragement.

The article below is taken from the special section Common Knowledge which is preceded by a very specific word combination *The Lex Column*.

Societe Generale

Societe Generale's decision to buy nearly 4 per cent of Credit Lyonnais complicates further the already tangled shareholder structure of the recently-privatised French bank. *But does it make a juicy bidding war more likely?*

Investors certainly seem to think so. Hence yesterday's near 10 per cent increase in CL's share price. One hope is that SG might challenge Credit Agricole for CL's hand when the latter's takeover protection starts to lift. Another is that the move will encourage other rival suitors, such as Banque Nationale de Paris, to enter the fray (From «F. T.», December, 2009).

At first sight, the answer suggests it to be an explicitly expressed informative question. The word “juicy” contains a certain implication- irony, which is fully explained at the end of the article.

This news is one of the most attractive for the reader. We would like to pay attention to the following:

1) The article has only a headline (in the separate section Common Knowledge) as readers are supposed to be aware of the topic. We point out that 80% of articles in this issue are presented with no subheadings.

2) The authors of the articles regularly use the word “but” before interrogative sentences unnecessarily as one would think, which has become a sort of journalistic cliché. It is by all means an attempt to draw attention to the authors’ personal opinions. Still, one can not deny that it is also a negative answer of a certain kind.

3) Personal opinion is presented regardless of any “underpinning” in the form of quotes or references.

We have intentionally mentioned the section title so as to clarify its aim and direction: to provide orientation for common readers in the flow of economic information and advertising flooded on them every day.

Comparing the section title and the beginning of the article makes it clear why the title is preceded by the word combination THE LEX COLUMN. The authors may probably attempt to put an advert on a higher level.

Let us focus on some material from the American newspaper “The Wall Street Journal Europe”. Although the following headline may contain certain understatement, there a tendency in the American national variant of English to use headlines which are quite clear to the reader.

A Guide to the Better Sort of People (by P. Levy)

«Among the 100, 000 of living people named in this edition there are plenty of non-Britons and nonresidents. The baronets Croft of Croft Castle have been Australians for several generations; the American- born Lord Menuhin died too late to be excised from this volume (*and by the way, is he the only peer to have had a Hebrew motto on his coat of arms?*)» (From The WSJE, August, 2009).

The structure of the interrogative sentence assumes the combination of the informative or explicative and the implicative functions, which is typical of this particular newspaper.

The following example of an interrogative question is from the section “Letters to the Editor” and is analysed here only due to its exclusive character (including this section in our analysis would misrepresent our main comparison of columnists’ articles).

Would You Fly the 'Killer' Skies?

How often would one expect to hear an airline CEO publicly describe an aircraft as a «killer airplane?» («Crowds in the Sky», front page, Aug.2) That kind of thoughtless comment, along with a description of the lack of comfort in the new Boeing 737, shows how corporate financial manage-

ment can run roughshod over customer service, and simultaneously ignore the sensitiveness of customers (From The WSJE, August, 2010).

In the headline, the author of the article turns to irony and tries to whitewash the real situation with falls of Boeing airplanes maintaining the American stand in aircraft construction. Such a headline is not typical of the newspaper style.

The first interrogative sentence of the passage is a rhetorical question requiring no answer – the author answers it himself (“thoughtless comment”).

The following interrogative construction of the headline assumes the author considering the problem and his possible suggestion of the problem solution further on: “Sovereign debt: How manageable is China’s red ink?” (The Economist June 28th 2011). The text of the article develops the topic of the headline and reflects the opinion of the author who answers his question in the headline: «Is there a problem here? I'd say yes and no. There is not a China debt problem in the way that there's a Greek debt problem. Tot up all the obligations, and they still don't amount to the sort of burden that's likely to trigger crisis /.../». A similar example of the same speech strategy is the headline «*Credit crunch consequences: three years after the crisis, what's changed?*» (The Observer, 8 August 2010).

The question asked in the headline is answered in the subheading: «The economic meltdown of 2007 shook the world – but financial reforms have failed to address fundamental problems». Acts of opinion are explicitly reflected in headlines bearing a certain piece of advice thus expressing the author’s point of view on appropriate behaviour in a particular situation: «*In the bad times, keep your best workers*» (15 Jan 2011 The Australian). In such cases, the content of the article just supplements the headline with factual information and does not require any comments.

The functioning of interrogative sentences is related to economic discourse. This particular type of discourse is characterised by features of both institutional and personality-oriented type of discourse. The thematic variability of economic discourse is relatively stable. Openness, i.e. an ability to integrate in any type of discourse and accessibility determined by wide influence of economics on various fields of human activity, are its key characteristics. A specific feature of economic discourse is a great number of terms, clichés, abbreviations, indexes as well as the use of the reclamation communicative strategy which is manifested in a strong necessity to use interrogative constructions in the explanation and comprehension of economic phenomena.

A headline complex structure is essential for readers’ perception of the text. Economic discourse headline complexes are strongly dominated by polystructural constructions preceding economic articles. The informative volume of a headline complex depends on its structure as both the headline and the subheading provide the reader with additional information concerning the topic of the message. Headlines and subheadings as headline complex components contain information which helps the reader to gear up for the mentioned topics instantly.

As we may see, interrogative sentences often perform the function of headlines; therefore we could not but pay special attention to a striking contrast between the British and American variants of economic discourse which is reflected by the relation of a headline and a subheading. In The Financial Times, the headline is meant to perform the contact setting function between the author and the reader while the subheading gives brief but clear information about the content of the article. In The Wall Street Journal Europe, headlines are almost identical in their content to British subheadings as they are just informative. As a rule, no subheadings are observed in American print issues. Interrogative questions used in prominent positions in newspaper articles may often perform the function of independent headlines and subheadings, which enables the authors to attract readers’ attention.

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