



POSUDEK OPONENTA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk a literatura (dvouoborové studium)**

Název práce: **The Use of Articles in English Newspaper Headlines**

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Stručná charakteristika práce / Short characteristics of the thesis

This bachelor thesis sets out to examine the patterns of article use and the tendencies for article omissions in the headlines of two British newspapers – The Guardian (representing a broadsheet newspaper) and The Sun (representing a tabloid).

The thesis is structured into 9 chapters. The first three – Introduction, Newspapers in the UK, and Characteristics of headlines – finish on page 5. Chapter 4 (11 pages) recapitulates Quirk's (1986) classification of the use of articles in English. The remainder of the thesis then sets out the data (the total of 175 headlines), methodology and the actual analysis.

The dissertation comprises 90 pages of text followed by Works Cited and an Appendix providing a complete list of all newspaper headlines analysed as well as charts detailing the individual analyses. Including this material, the thesis amounts to 152 pages of text. No electronic medium containing a copy of the text has been provided.

Celkové zhodnocení / Overall assessment

Firstly, I would wish to appreciate the amount of work the student has invested into her research. The detail of the analysis clearly demonstrates a student who is working hard and is very thorough in setting out the many parameters which need to be taken into consideration when undertaking a study of this kind.

Also, using live data from two very different UK newspapers with a diverse readership and with very specific styles of communicative practice created a great potential to contrast the headlines used and the degree to which they did or did not follow the grammatical conventions of writing.

Unfortunately, I have two main concerns regarding the thesis which I feel let down the final submission.

Firstly, I feel that the thesis lacks a clear methodological frame that would underpin the detailed analysis undertaken and the interpretation of what the findings may mean. It is not clear nor substantiated why the author uses the entire classification of the use of articles in English and deems this to be the set standard of "correct" use also for newspaper headlines. Whilst such a prescriptive rules-based comparison might be an interesting awareness raising trigger for learners of English, it does not seem appropriate



as a methodological starting point and framework aiming to describe authentic data in such a specific genre as headlines (where the register, often referred to as 'block language' or 'reduced written register', features systematic omissions of certain elements). The notion of genre and its implications for the use of articles in newspaper headlines – or rather their omissions in the main – should have certainly been given more attention. Stemming from that is a degree of confusion about what is subsequently labelled as "correct" and "incorrect" use of articles. The attempt to identify the degree of "correctness" not only takes up a lot of research effort but yields very little research reward, as the author herself points out in Section 7.3. A more concise label relating to the omission of articles would have been, I think, more productive in keeping with what the student was seeking to achieve. As a result of this in my view analytically unfortunate departure point, the two perspectives developed in the analysis do not work as well as they could have. Instead, Section 7.2 should have been introduced first to develop the focus on the phenomenon of the articles omission. Section 7.1 should then followed this to analyse the features of article omissions across the entire data set in a systematic way. As the logic of the analysis was not clarified upfront, the student actually ended up undertaking a substantial amount of analytical work which she then found difficult to make sense of.

Secondly, I feel that the student could have made more of the conclusions of her research. She had clearly identified the difference between the style of the two newspapers and the level and command of English language of their respective readerships. Her findings were interesting in that both newspapers displayed a very similar level of grammatical headline "accuracy", something as a reader of UK newspapers I would never have predicted. However, in my mind there is again a clear difference between an error which is the writer's or proofreader's responsibility and an omission which may be a deliberate choice to create a particular vision. This lack of interpretation of how the morphosyntactic structure actually operates to fit the pragmatic purpose of newspaper headlines is a major failing of the analysis, which otherwise features a substantial amount of critical thinking and a lot of potential that has not been focused in the right direction. It is a shame that the author makes little recognition of the fact that newspaper headlines are written to function as autonomous news items (e.g., see the Guardian Style Guide on headlines) and that she so minimally contrasts her work critically against the findings of other researchers working in the area. For example, the references of Bucaria (2004), Marcoci (2014) and Filyasova (2018) are each referred to only once in the entire thesis and not as part of the concluding critical discussion.

Of lesser significance is the lower level of expression in English. The most distracting are stylistic deficiencies and errors in morphosyntax as in the first line of the Abstract, which is strategically important ("The newspapers are one of the most common ways how to obtain information about the world around us" → "Newspapers are one of the most common ways in which the public obtain information about the world around them") or the last line of the Conclusion ("headlines to would help to prove"). Others include spelling errors (e.g., p. 88 "and olt inly in 4 examples") or mislabelling (e.g., p. 82 the chart for the Sun is not labelled nor has a heading; p. 77, Table XX). Here a final proofread would have been beneficial.

I recommend a pass based on the level of work and analysis undertaken. This could, however, have been a much better grade given the above comments.



Areas for discussion:

- 1) Having had the time to reflect on your thesis, how would you summarise your findings about the use of articles in the Guardian and the Sun newspapers? How would you pragmatically account for the tendencies of article omissions that you identified in your analysis?
- 2) Please review Andrew Weir's (2009) study *Article drop in English headlines* (<https://folk.ntnu.no/andrewww/Weir-2009-headlines.pdf>) and compare its methodological frame with the one you adopted. Can you also comment on the findings obtained? How do they complement or differ from your own work?

Práci doporučuji k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: dobře

Datum

Podpis