

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER HEADLINES**



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ABSTRACT

This thesis comparatively investigates headlines in four English-language newspapers, namely *China Daily* in mainland China, *South China Morning Post* in Hong Kong, *The New York Times* in the United States, and *Reuters* in the UK.

Finite clauses (55.2%) and the material process are very popular in headline writing. Different ways of dealing with agency, for example nominalization and passivization for obscuring or suppressing agency, to a certain extent, reflect different ideologies of different newspapers. Some innovative uses of punctuation are found in news headlines, including the comma replacing 'and', and the colon or dash replacing the 'say' verb to indicate the source of information.

Headlines in *China Daily* reflect stricter propaganda restrictions as it is less common for its editors to identify speakers and major participants in the headlines. *China Daily* also tends to obscure agency in headlines. SCMP ranks first in using finite clausal headlines. Headlines in NYT seem to be less deviant from traditional grammar. NYT very often retains the copula and innovative uses of punctuation rarely occur. *Reuters* tends to innovatively use punctuation in headline writing. With the highest occurrence of verbal processes, *Reuters* tends to introduce statement sources.

The thesis originally classifies headlines as clausal ones and non-clausal ones. The study of punctuation is also a new contribution.