

The Guardian USA Baseball Headlines from a Syntactic Perspective

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to identify the main syntactic characteristics examined in a corpus of 100 baseball headlines from the sports section, more specifically the Major League Baseball (MLB) section, of the daily newspaper The Guardian USA in its electronic version. Newspaper headlines are distinctive because they are brief texts that summarize the content of the article they precede. Baseball headlines in The Guardian USA respect these characteristics. Furthermore, they display specific syntactic features that are analyzed in this article. The main results of the study were firstly that this newspaper favors the use of verbal constructions in its headlines rather than non-verbal constructions. On the one hand, the present tense third person was the verbal construction most commonly used. On the other hand, in the non-verbal constructions, the most common headline was the one constituted by two noun phrases which were linked by a colon.

Index terms— Syntax, baseball headlines, verbal constructions, non-verbal constructions, present indicative, noun phrases.

1 I. Introduction

The aim of this study is to describe syntactically a corpus of 100 headlines of the sports section, more precisely the Major League Baseball (MLB) section, of The Guardian USA newspaper in its electronic version. We have carried out similar research about general sports headlines in Spanish (Quintero Ramírez, 2013a), English (Quintero Ramírez, 2015), and French with different corpora, for the reason that we consider that sports headlines display specific syntactic characteristics. Moreover, we believe that each language has a particular way of presenting sports headlines. It is also our belief that each sport stimulates journalists and editors to write the headlines in a more particular way.

In order to attain the referred objective of the study, this paper is organized as follows. First, a literature review section is introduced. In this section, two significant topics are examined, news headlines and the importance of sports discourse. Next, a methodology section is presented. In this section, there are also two main themes, a) how we set up the corpus of the study, and b) the procedure we followed in order to analyze the corpus. Then, the corpus is analyzed according to the syntactic factors presented in the literature review. Finally, conclusions of this study are drawn.

2 II.

Literature Review a) Newspaper headlines Newspaper articles have the specific task of informing the readers about any event in politics, economy, culture, fashion, entertainment, sports, etc. As a rule of newspaper writing, every article must be preceded by a headline (Mouillaud, 1982: 75). Newspaper headlines are defined as summaries of the news that are written in the body of the article (Alarcos Llorach, 1977; van Dijk, 1990; Ferrera Cecilia, 2006; Castro Ferrer, 2011). For Runji-Stoilova & Gali (2013: 275), "[n]ewspaper headlines are specific types of texts in which one or more words announce the following text.

43 The headline takes the central place in the text: it is graphically separated from the text body and often
44 classified in the group of small texts". Moreover, Pou Amérigo (2001: 145) asserts that newspaper headlines
45 represent the first contact between the reader and the newspaper (in its printed and online versions). Sports
46 headlines, and more specifically baseball headlines are not the exception. ??fantidou (2004: 699) states that
47 "headlines seek to perform two functions: (a) summarize and (b) attract attention to the full-text newspaper
48 article."In spite of these two main purposes, regularly many skilled readers do not feel completely attracted to
49 the article and they feel satisfied with the information they read in the headlines. Consequently, they prefer to
50 spend their time skimming the newspaper headlines rather than reading the entire articles ??Dor, 2003: 695).
51 This happens essentially because of the massive quantity of information that is published in the newspapers and
52 also because of the lack of time readers claim to have (Lozano Ascencio et al., 2011).

53 In relation to syntactic features newspaper headlines display, Bucaria (2004), Herrero Cecilia (2006) T
54 Therefore, we have decided to examine newspaper headlines in this study because of the importance of this
55 text genre and also because "[n]ewspaper headlines are an interesting field to research, given the specific kind
56 of linguistic phenomena that can be observed in this particular register." ??Bucaria, 2004: 280). Actually, in
57 previous studies we have observed that newspaper headlines display some specific syntactic characteristics that
58 are not appropriate in other texts (see Quintero Ramírez, 2013a). and Tahar (2012) affirm that headlines are
59 distinguished for their brevity and conciseness due to space restrictions. These two important features provoke
60 ellipsis of particular grammar categories (Bucaria, 2004; Nadal Palazón, 2012; Quintero Ramírez, 2013a), the
61 incidence of noun phrases (Nadal Palazón, 2012), and the prevalence of short verbal constructions in the present
62 indicative third person (Alcoba Rueda, 1985; Zorrilla Barroso, 1996; Quintero Ramírez, 2013a) instead of other
63 tenses, moods and persons.

64 3 b) Sports discourse

65 Sports discourse is a variety of language; in other words, it is a specialized discourse that displays precise
66 characteristics that must be distinguished from those of other specialized languages such as the discourse in
67 philosophy, religion, politics and advertising ??Groppaldi, 2009: 107). Sports journalists, commentators and
68 experts have a tendency to use creativity in their discourse in order to attract the audience (Curvadic & Vargas,
69 2010: 218).

70 Sports discourse has been the main subject of a considerable amount of linguistic research. Undoubtedly,
71 football discourse has been one of the most studied (Nomdedeu, 2004;Mapelli, 2004Mapelli, , 2009Mapelli, &
72 2010;;Medina Montero, 2007 In this particular study, we focus on baseball headlines because even if baseball
73 is a widely publicized sport especially in throughout America and Japan, it has not been studied extensively.
74 Hence, as we have seen throughout this literature review section, baseball headlines are an interesting linguistic
75 phenomenon that can be studied from a syntactic perspective.

76 4 III. Research Methodology a) Corpus formation

77 For this study, we considered a corpus of 100 baseball headlines, all of them from The Guardian USA in its online
78 version. The baseball headlines considered for the corpus were published from January to November 2014.

79 In the corpus, we observed a considerable amount of headlines that belong to a specific section. Indeed, the
80 baseball segment of The Guardian USA presents three sections: a) as it happened!, is a section that synthetizes
81 the main actions of a baseball game and sometimes even the postgame; the sub-titles of the section include the
82 exact time where the events took place, i.e., 9:36 p.m. RUN! Giants 3-2 Royals, top 4 th . b) Sportblog, is a
83 section that offers some stimulating themes in order to provoke the reaction of the audience. People can write
84 any comment on any subject highlighted in the section 1 c) MLB: five things we learned, presents the most recent
85 news related to Major League Baseball. As the section name clearly states, five important baseball summaries
86 are revealed here; for example, in Major League Baseball has a new pope -but can it fight off the MLS heretics?
87 section of 15 August 2014, there are other four subtitles presented: The great plate debate, Bronx tales, A Royal
88 roll, And finally.

89 ; for example, Derek Jeter to end New York Yankees career in Boston Red Sox territory.

90 All this elucidation is noteworthy because the name of the section is included in the headline. Nevertheless,
91 we have not considered it as part of the corpus because that would change the whole syntactic configuration of
92 many of our headlines, especially those with a non-verbal structure.

93 5 b) Analysis procedure

94 For the analysis, we considered the ideas presented in the theoretical framework and the previous research on
95 headlines ??Alcoba Rueda, 1985; Zorrilla Barroso, 1996;Bucaria, 2004; Nadal Palazón, 2012; Quintero Ramírez,
96 2013a; etc.). Therefore, the initial way to classify the headlines is in two main groups: a) verbal constructions
97 and b) non-verbal constructions. On the one hand, the headlines constituted by verbs are analyzed according to
98 the tense, mood, person and number. Moreover, they are examined in relation to the modality expressed, i.e.,
99 affirmative, interrogative, negative, injunctive, etc. Furthermore, we comment on the arguments and adjuncts
100 of the verb: direct object complements, circumstantial complements, etc. On the other hand, the non-verbal
101 constructions are analyzed according to the type of phrases the headline presents, i.e., noun phrases, prepositional

102 phrases, infinitive phrases, and others. In addition, we comment on the different grammatical categories that
103 constitute the phrases. Hence, the method we adopted to analyze the corpus is composed as follows:

104 6 IV. Analysis

105 From the corpus of 100 baseball headlines, there were 63 verbal constructions and 37 non-verbal constructions.
106 7 of the verbal headlines included two verbs, hence there were 70 verbal phrases. From these verbal phrases,
107 63 were in the present tense, 4 in the simple past, 1 in the present perfect, 1 in the simple future and 1 in the
108 imperative. From the headlines written with non-verbal constructions, 20 revealed the following pattern: noun
109 phrase + : (colon) + noun phrase; 6 headlines were written with two noun phrases linked by the conjunction
110 and; 6 other headlines were written with a noun phrase + an infinitive phrase; 3 headlines had the following
111 pattern: noun phrase + a past participle phrase; and finally, 2 headlines adopted this configuration: noun phrase
112 + prepositional phrase.

113 Tables 1, 2 and 3 synthetize the data presented in the paragraph. From the 64 phrases in the present tense,
114 42 were in the third person singular as in example (4); whereas 22 were in third person plural as in example
115 (5). From the 4 phrases in past tense, 3 had a single subject as in example (1) and only 1 had a plural subject.
116 Most of the headlines were affirmative as in examples (??), (??) and (??), with only a very small number of
117 exceptions in the interrogative mood as in example (2). Indeed, from the 63 verbal constructions, 53 were in the
118 affirmative mood, whereas only 10 were in the interrogative mood. No verbal construction was in negative mood.

119 (In our corpus, 90% of the verbal constructions were conjugated in the present indicative. This is not
120 surprising nor unexpected, since Alcoba ??ueda (1983: 114) asserts that the present indicative is very recurrent
121 in newspaper headlines for the reason that it is a tenseless form. Therefore, the present indicative is used in
122 newspaper headlines for referring any past, present or future information. It does not matter if the article is
123 written in other moods and tenses. According to Zorrilla ??aroso (1996: 102), the indicative present is a very
124 common trait in any newspaper headline because it offers the headline an impression of immediateness and
125 realism; these characteristics attract the attention of the reader.

126 Moreover, we have noted that the subjects of the verbal constructions that are singular refer to a baseball
127 player as in examples (??) and (4), a baseball manager as in example (??), a place as in example (6) or a
128 specific situation as in example (7); whereas the subjects in plural refer to a baseball team as in example (5) or
129 a group of things as in example (8). When the headline mentions a baseball team, this is referred to in different
130 ways, the reference could be made through the name of the city they represent and the nickname as we can note
131 in example (5) San Francisco Giants and in example (9) Tampa Bay Rays; through the name of the city they
132 represent as in example (5) Kansas City; the nickname preceded by the determiner the as in example (10)The
133 Cardinals; and finally, the nickname without any As it can be noted in table 1, the baseball segment from The
134 Guardian USA has a strong preference for the use of verbal constructions in its headlines. As it has been stated
135 before, there were 70 verbal phrases from which 63 were conjugated in the present indicative third person, 4
136 phrases were conjugated in the past tense third person as in example (1), 1 headline with two verbs displayed a
137 present The Guardian USA Baseball Headlines from a Syntactic Perspective determiner as in example (11)

138 7 Syntactic configuration

139 After having presented general syntactic data, we present the specific syntactic configuration that the previously
140 mentioned examples display. Baseball headline (1) is conjugated in the past tense third person singular. The
141 subject of the headline is a specific situation of the MLB, this is Major League Baseball's (brief) return to
142 Montreal, the verb to be is conjugated in the past tense and the complement is a noun phrase formed by the
143 indefinite determiner a followed by the word runaway that in this context functions as an adjective, and finally
144 the noun success. The singular third person pronoun he is the subject. The contraction won't, formed by the
145 auxiliary verb will and the negative adverb not, followed by the bare infinitive be and the -ING form of the verb
146 to play constitute the continuous form of the verbal periphrasis in the simple future. The common noun baseball
147 functions as the direct object complement. Finally, the noun phrase this year represents the circumstantial
148 complement of time.

149 Example (3) is the only headline that presents a verbal construction in imperative mood; hence this headline
150 calls for audience participation, since imperatives that use the bare infinitive form of the verb imply a second
151 person subject. The headline presents the following configuration: noun phrase+ : (colon) + verb in imperative
152 mood + direct object complement. The noun phrase MLB Postseason 2014 represents the event in which the
153 headline is enunciated (a frame of reference according to Nadal Palazón, 2012). The verb to share is presented
154 in its bare form. Finally, the noun phrase formed by the possessive determiner your and the nouns photos and
155 experiences linked by the conjunction and represents the direct object complement.

156 The syntactic configuration of baseball headline (4) is one of the most common in our corpus: subject + verb
157 + direct object complement + circumstantial complement of place. The subject of the headline is the full name
158 of the baseball player Derek Jeter. The verb to get is conjugated in the present indicative third person singular.
159 The direct object complement is made up of a noun phrase formed by the possessive determiner his and the
160 common noun day. Finally, the circumstantial complement consists of the preposition at and the noun phrase
161 Yankee Stadium.

162 The headline (5) Example (10) presents the following syntactic configuration: subject + verbal periphrasis +
163 direct object complement + circumstantial complement of purpose. The subject of the headline is represented
164 by a noun phrase formed by the definite determiner the and the nickname of the baseball team Cardinals. The
165 verbal periphrasis is formed by the auxiliary verb need followed by the full infinitive to reclaim; the auxiliary
166 verb is conjugated in the present indicative third person plural.

167 The noun phrase spirit of '64 represents the direct object complement. The infinitive phrase to heal St Louis'
168 racial tensions is a circumstantial complement of purpose.

169 8 b) Non-verbal baseball headlines

170 As it has been stated before, there were 37 nonverbal baseball headlines in the corpus from which 20 had two
171 noun phrases separated by a colon, i.e., noun phrase + : (colon) + noun phrase as in example (12).

172 Nadal Palazón (2012: 177-178) states that one constant syntactic feature in headlines is the presence of two
173 noun phrases linked by a colon. The first noun phrase can be considered a reference frame, i.e., it refers to a
174 place or to a specific theme that will be mentioned in the headline and in the body of the article. In example
175 (12), the reference frame is presented in the second noun phrase and it refers to the event in which the game
176 took place. (12)

177 9 Syntactic configuration

178 Headline (12) presents two noun phrases linked by a colon. The first noun phrase is formed by the final score
179 of the match between San Francisco and Kansas City; both teams are referred to by their full names, i.e., the
180 name of the city and its nickname: San Francisco Giants and Kansas City Royals. The second noun phrase
181 consists of the name of the event in which the game took place, (the reference frame according to Nadal Palazón,
182 2012: 177-178), i.e., 2014 World Series. Headline (??3) is very similar to the one analyzed in (12), the only
183 difference between them is that in this example the noun phrases are not linked by a punctuation mark but by
184 the conjunction and. In example (12), the conjunction and would not be an appropriate choice because the two
185 noun phrases do not represent two parallel issues as in (13), where the first noun phrase announces the Wes
186 Wekler's drugs case and the second noun phrase refers to other famous drug-in-sports cases.

187 Headlines (14)(15)(16) display two similarities: a) their first constituent is a noun phrase, and b) the verbs
188 that were supposed to form the verbal construction are elided. Nadal Palazón (2012: 179) asserts that another
189 constant feature in headlines is the presence of two noun phrases that elide the verb, especially when they were
190 supposed to form a copula. Moreover, 6 headlines were written by two noun phrases linked by the conjunction
191 and as in example (13), and 6 other headlines were constituted by a noun phrase + an infinitive phrase as in (14).
192 Furthermore, 3 headlines had the following pattern: noun phrase + past participle phrase as in example (15).
193 Most of the headlines formed by two noun phrases separated by a colon belong to the -as it happened! section.
194 That is one of the reasons why we did not consider the name of the sections as part of the headlines. Finally, 2
195 baseball headlines displayed the following configuration: noun phrase + prepositional phrase as in example (16).

196 Finally, headline (11) presents two verbal clauses, linked by a comma. Both sentences display the same
197 syntactic configuration, i.e., subject + verb + direct object complement. The nicknames of the baseball teams
198 Orioles and Nationals linked by the conjunction and represent the subject of the first clause. The verb to capture
199 is conjugated in the present indicative third person plural. The noun phrase division flags is the direct object
200 complement. The nickname of the baseball team Angels is the subject of the second clause. The verb to reach
201 is conjugated in the present In headline (14), there is the following pattern: noun phrase + infinitive phrase.
202 The noun phrase is once again the full name of the baseball player Derek Jeter; and the infinitive phrase is
203 constituted by the full infinitive to retire + the circumstantial complement of place from Major League Baseball
204 + the circumstantial complement of time after 2014 season.

205 10 Headline

206 (15) presents the following configuration: noun phrase + past participle phrase. The noun phrase is Mets and
207 Yankees' Subway Series;

208 both teams are referred to by their nicknames, this is due perhaps to the fact that both teams represent
209 the same city: New York. The past participle phrase is constituted by the past participle played out + the
210 circumstantial complement of means with background of change.

211 Finally, headline (??6) is formed by noun phrase + prepositional phrase. The name of the baseball team San
212 Francisco Giants functions as the noun phrase of the headline; the prepositional phrase consists of the preposition
213 in + the noun phrase marathon victory over Washington Nationals. Both teams are referred to in this headline by
214 their full names, that is the name of the city and the nickname: San Francisco Giants and Washington Nationals.

215 11 V. Conclusions

216 Something we observed in the baseball headlines of the corpus is the consistent way to name the baseball players
217 or the managers. Indeed, when the baseball headline refers to a baseball player or manager, he is referred to by
218 his name and last name as in examples (2) Alex Rodriguez, (4) Derek Jeter, (9) Joe Maddon, etc., in spite of the
219 brevity and conciseness that characterize newspaper headlines, (Bucaria, 2004;Herrero Cecilia, 2006).

220 Nevertheless, when the headline refers to a baseball team, the way to name them is not as consistent as with
 221 players and managers. In fact, teams are mentioned in four different ways: a) the name of the city that the
 222 team represents and the nickname as we can note in examples (9) Tampa Bay Rays, (12) San Francisco Giants,
 223 Kansas City Royals, (16) Washington Nationals, etc.; b) the nickname without any determiner as in examples
 224 (11) Orioles, Nationals and Angels, (15) Mets and Yankees, etc., c) the name of the city the team represents as
 225 in (5) Kansas City, and finally d) the nickname preceded by the determiner the as in (10): The Cardinals. The
 226 first way was by far the most frequent one in our corpus. The second one was the second most frequent. While
 227 the third and the fourth ones were not very common in our corpus.

228 Finally, we reached the objective presented in the introduction of this paper. Indeed, we identified the main
 229 syntactic characteristics of 100 baseball headlines of The Guardian USA. Nevertheless, we are conscious that
 230 these results are not categorical nor conclusive. Consequently, further research about newspaper headlines in
 231 baseball and other sports must be done in order to characterize sports discourse. This further research would
 232 help to contrast the results and establish the most notable similarities and differences between the headlines of
 233 a whole diversity of sports such as boxing, basketball, rugby, tennis, gymnastics, etc.

234 12 Corado



Figure 1: 1)

1

Syntactic configuration	Frequencies	
Verbal construction		63
Non-verbal construction		37
Total		100

Figure 2: Table 1 :

235 1 2

¹This is the most commented section of the baseball segment of The Guardian USA.

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2

Verbal phrases in baseball headlines	Frequencies
Present tense	63
Past tense	4
Present perfect	1
Simple future	1
Imperative	1
Total	70

Figure 3: Table 2 :

3

constructions	Frequencies
Non-verbal baseball headlines	
Noun phrase +: + noun phrase	20
Noun phrase + and + noun phrase	6
Noun phrase + infinitive phrase	6
Noun phrase + past participle phrase	3
Noun phrase + prepositional phrase	2
Total	37

a) Baseball headlines with verbal constructions

Figure 4: Table 3 :

Figure 5:

Figure 6:

- 236 [En and Aa] , V V En , Aa . Manuel Alcántara. p. .
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