



FEATURES OF PRECEDENT NAMES IN ENGLISH NEWS HEADLINES

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Abstract. The article examines the role of precedent names in English news headlines and their stylistic potential in modern media discourse. Special attention is given to the ways precedent names function as compressed cultural markers that activate background knowledge and influence the interpretation of news events. It is argued that journalists use precedent names to intensify expressiveness, create evaluative meanings, and establish intertextual links between the reported event and culturally significant images. The article also emphasizes that the successful decoding of such headlines depends on the reader's cultural competence and familiarity with precedent sources.

Key words: precedent phenomenon; precedent name; headline; intertextuality; news style; media discourse; allusion.

Introduction. The language of modern news is not limited to the simple transmission of facts. Along with providing information, news texts often shape the reader's perception of reality through expressive and intertextual means. One of the most productive devices in this process is the use of precedent phenomena, especially precedent names.

A precedent name is a name that is widely known in a certain linguistic and cultural community and evokes stable associations. Such names may come from literature, history, politics, mythology, cinema, or religion. In news discourse, they



are used not merely as lexical units but as cultural signs carrying additional evaluative and emotional meanings.

The relevance of the topic is determined by the growing frequency of precedent names in contemporary English-language journalism, especially in headlines. Since headlines are designed to attract attention and present information in a condensed way, journalists often employ precedent names to create vivid and intellectually engaging messages. The purpose of this article is to analyze the stylistic features and communicative functions of precedent names in English news headlines.

Literary review. The study of precedent phenomena is closely connected with the theory of intertextuality. Intertextuality explains how one text refers to or incorporates elements of another text, thus creating additional layers of meaning. Scholars in linguistics and discourse studies emphasize that precedent phenomena function as important carriers of cultural memory and shared knowledge.

Researchers note that precedent names differ from ordinary proper names because they possess symbolic value and trigger associative meaning. Such names are capable of expressing evaluation in a highly compressed form. In media discourse, precedent names have been studied as instruments of persuasion, identification, and emotional influence. They help journalists present social actors and events through already familiar cultural models.

News headlines are considered a particularly productive space for precedent phenomena because they require brevity, impact, and memorability. A headline with a precedent name not only informs but also interprets. Therefore, the use of names such as Hitler, Cinderella, Napoleon, or Robin Hood in news reporting becomes a significant stylistic and pragmatic phenomenon.

Material and methods. This study is based on a qualitative analysis of English news headlines taken from online newspapers and media platforms published during recent years. The material includes headlines from political, economic, cultural, and



social news sections where precedent names are used either directly or in transformed form.

The method of analysis combines elements of content analysis, stylistic analysis, and discourse analysis. The selected headlines were examined with the aim of identifying the main types of precedent names, their semantic associations, and their pragmatic functions in the context of news style. The analysis focuses on how precedent names contribute to expressiveness, evaluation, and the intertextual nature of media communication.

Results and discussion. The analysis shows that precedent names are actively used in English news headlines as concise instruments of characterization. Their main stylistic value lies in their ability to compress a large amount of cultural information into a short linguistic form. When a politician is called a Napoleon or a public figure is compared to Robin Hood, the journalist does not simply describe the person but introduces a ready-made frame for interpretation.

One of the main functions of precedent names in headlines is evaluative. Such names often imply irony, criticism, admiration, or warning. For example, the use of the name Cinderella may indicate an unexpected rise or transformation, while the use of Frankenstein may suggest that a created system or political force has become dangerous and uncontrollable.

Another important function is the expressive one. Precedent names make headlines more vivid, memorable, and emotionally colored. They also stimulate the reader's intellectual activity, since recognition of the precedent reference requires certain background knowledge. In this way, headlines become a form of intellectual play between the journalist and the audience.

In addition, precedent names contribute to the intertextuality of news style. Through such names, current events are connected with literary plots, historical personalities, myths, or popular cultural characters. This makes the text not only



informative but interpretative. The reader understands the event through analogy rather than through neutral description alone.

At the same time, the use of precedent names may create difficulties. If the audience does not recognize the allusion, the intended meaning may be only partially understood. This means that the effectiveness of precedent names depends on the cultural competence of the target readership.

Conclusion. Precedent names occupy an important place in English news headlines and represent a productive means of stylistic and pragmatic influence. They make headlines more expressive, evaluative, and intertextual, while also helping journalists compress complex meanings into concise forms. Their use reflects the tendency of modern news discourse to move beyond pure information and toward interpretation and reader engagement.

The study confirms that precedent names function as powerful cultural markers in news style. Their successful use depends on shared background knowledge between author and audience. Further research may focus on the cross-cultural interpretation of precedent names in translated news discourse and digital media environments.

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