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HEADLINE-PHOTO CORRELATION IN ENGLISH NEWS TEXTS

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The article is devoted to investigating the correlation between the headline and the photograph in English news stories as an integral multimodal complex, since in digital environment these two elements most often create the first impression of the event and frame its perception before reading the body of the news. The topicality of the research is determined by the transformations of media discourse in the digital epoch, when news stories more and more often become a combination of various semiotic resources – verbal and visual, – which together shape readers' initial perception of an event. The article identifies the types of headline-photo interactions in news stories and describes their functions in construing news content. The study examines 50 news stories published on the BBC website. The multimodal discourse analysis has become a theoretical background according to which meaning in media stories is created not only through language but also through visual means and the ways they are combined. The article outlines headline functions (descriptive, expressive, directive) and those of photographs (informative, emotional, decorative) and shows that their interaction shapes the addressees' first impression, encourages them to read the body of the news and guides their interpretation of the news. The analysis results in distinguishing the main types of correlations between headlines and photographs: supplementary (a photo clarifies or visually specifies the headline message), intensifying (the image emotionally reinforces or dramatizes the headline meaning) and contrastive (a visual component partly or completely does not coincide with the headline emphasis, creating semantic tension and prompting the reader to turn to text). The study concludes that the headline and the photograph in media news stories function as interconnected element capable of facilitating event comprehension and directing the reader's attention through effects of emotional influence and contrast. Further research is seen in the focus on correlations between headlines and other non-verbal components (graphs, videos) as well as in studying translating transformations while rendering multimedia news into Ukrainian.

Key words: news headline, photograph, multimodality, media discourse, correlation.

Талавіра Наталія, Міщенко Тетяна. Кореляція заголовка і фотографії в англomовному новинному тексті

Анотована стаття присвячена вивченню кореляції заголовка та фотографії в англomовному новинному тексті як цілісному мультимодальному комплексу, оскільки у цифровому середовищі саме ці два елементи найчастіше формують перше враження про подію та задають рамку її сприйняття ще до читання основного повідомлення. Актуальність роботи зумовлена трансформаціями медіадискурсу в цифрову епоху, коли новинні повідомлення все частіше виступають поєднанням різних семіотичних ресурсів – вербальних і візуальних, що спільно формують первинне сприйняття події. У статті встановлено типи взаємодії заголовка й фотографії в текстах новин та опис їхніх функцій у констру-



юванні змісту. Матеріалом дослідження слугують 50 новинних повідомлень, опублікованих на сайті BBC. Теоретичне підґрунтя розвідки становлять положення мультимодального дискурс-аналізу, відповідно до якого значення в медіатексті створюється не лише мовою, а й візуальними засобами та способом їх поєднання. У роботі окреслено функції заголовка (описова, експресивна, директивна) і фотографії (інформативна, емоційна, декоративна), а також показано, що саме їхня взаємодія визначає перше враження адресата, спонукає його до прочитання основного тексту і спрямовує інтерпретацію новини. У результаті аналізу виокремлено основні типи кореляції заголовків та фотографій: доповнювальний (фото уточнює або візуально конкретизує повідомлення заголовка), підсилювальний (зображення емоційно посилює або драматизує смисл заголовка) та контрастивний (візуальний компонент частково або повністю не збігається з акцентом заголовка, створюючи семантичну напругу і стимулюючи звернення до тексту). Зроблено висновок, що заголовок і фотографія у медійному повідомленні функціонують як взаємопов'язані елементи, здатні полегшувати розуміння події та керувати увагою читача через ефекти емоційного впливу та контрасту. Перспективи подальших досліджень убачаються в аналізі взаємодії заголовків з іншими невербальними компонентами (графіки, відео), а також у вивченні перекладацьких трансформацій у відтворенні мультимодальних новин українською мовою.

Ключові слова: новинний заголовок, фотографія, мультимодальність, кореляція.

Introduction. Modern media shape our perception of world events by presenting news as a convergence of various modes [2, p. 23], a combination of linguistic units, images, and audiovisual components [9, p. 132]. Photography, in its turn, is not only “a visual record of a selected fragment of reality or an illustration that supplements the text” [18, p. 99], but it also encodes a new world and contributes to constructing a message in correlation with words, sentences, and the whole text. In combination with the headline and the caption, the photography prepares the audience for the perception of the text, grabs the addressee’s attention by arousing their curiosity [17, p. 1], familiarizes them with the key ideas, and encourages them to continue reading the text body [12]. Being perceived first, photographs set the emotional tone and direct the understanding of the event [3, p. 8]. The **topicality** of the suggested paper lies in the multimodal nature of media discourse, the omnipresence of images in news stories and the necessity to explain the role of photographs in conveying the message.

The **aim** of the article is to investigate the correlation between the headline and the photograph in news texts, while the **tasks** encompass the following: to reveal the essence of multimodality and its role in a news text; to determine the functions of photography in news discourse; to establish the types of relationships between news headlines and photographs.

The **material** of the research are 50 news items published on the news site www.bbc.com, selected in December 2025–January 2026.

Literature overview. In recent decades, news texts have continued to attract scholars’

attention, with researchers examining them from two major perspectives – functioning of individual linguistic units, such as idioms [4] or colour terms [1] and the global organisation of news stories and its transformations [8; 5; 6] resulting from the development of digital technologies. These developments have significantly expanded the possibilities for combining different semiotic resources, leading to the emergence of multimodal news products in which text, image, colour, movement and sound interact.

The theoretical foundation for the linguistic conceptualization of the category of multimodality originates from the concept of modality, which took its roots in philosophy and logic to characterize judgments such as possibility or necessity [10, p. 2]. The anthropocentric approach, focused on the speaker as the creator of meaning, facilitated a shift towards a broader concept of multimodality, which encompasses the interaction of different semiotic resources within a single message – verbal, visual, auditory, and kinetic [7, p. 75].

The subsequent development of the concept took place in the works of G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen, who conceptualized communication as the interaction of different semiotic codes – language, speech, images, and space [15]. They approached social semiotics as a framework that makes it possible to understand how people create and interpret meaning not only through language, but also through images, colour, composition, space, and other non-verbal means [15]. Similar ideas are further developed within the framework of multimodal discourse analysis, the

core premise of which is that in real-life communication meaning is almost never constructed through language alone; instead, language operates in conjunction with images, gestures, movement, sound, space, and visual design [15]. Within critical discourse analysis, particular attention is paid to the ways in which language and images jointly create ideological meanings in media, advertising, politics, and institutional communication, as a substantial part of power, persuasion, and manipulation is realized through visual resources, which are perceived quicker [16].

The analysis of theoretical approaches to multimodality demonstrates that modern communication functions as an integrated system of various semiotic resources, within which verbal, visual, typographic, and spatial elements jointly construct meaning. [2]. This approach is particularly productive for the analysis of media discourse, where photographs and headlines emerge as key multimodal components of news stories, as they constitute the primary point of contact between the media text and the audience. Their interaction plays a crucial role in guiding interpretation and readers' initial understanding of the news. Therefore, the analysis that follows focuses on the multimodal interplay between photographic images and headlines as central meaning-making resources in news stories.

Research results. When analyzing modern news items, it becomes clear that the headline and photograph function as interconnected elements of a single text, with the visual component playing a significant role in forming the first impression and overall understanding of a described event. It is the combination of the headline and the photograph that determines the addressee's initial interpretation of the news message. The headline and the photo are the first two elements that grab the reader's attention and, at the same time, embody a whole through their graphic distinction [18, p. 104].

The correlation between the headline and the photo is grounded in the functions they both perform. The headline may be descriptive, providing information about the event; expressive, accentuating the emotions of the addresser; or directive, stimulating the audience to take some action [18, p. 104]. The photo can clarify, direct or correct the perception of the headline content,

thus, it can be informative, picturing some detail about the event; emotional, stirring readers' feeling; or decorative, serving as a visual supplement to the headline.

The interaction between the headline and the photo can intensify the text message if the image complements the headline content, or create a disparity if the visual element differs from the verbal one. Thus, we distinguish four main types of headline-photo correlation: supplementary, intensifying and contrastive.

Supplementary type encompasses the descriptive headline and the informative photo that explains and clarifies the person, fact, or phenomenon mentioned above it. The image visually specifies the event, showing portraits of its participants, location, or consequences of the happening.

(1) *Colombia sentences ex-paramilitary leader Mancuso to 40 years in jail* (BBC, 20.01.2026)



Pic. 1. The photo to headline (1). surl.li/iyclje

In (1), the headline informs about the imprisonment of the Colombian citizen, denoted by the unit *ex-paramilitary leader Mancuso*. As this person may be unfamiliar to the global audience of the BBC, the news text contains his photo, which supplements the headline.

(2) *Village bus shelter gets artistic makeover* (BBC, 09.12.2025)



Pic. 2. The photo to headline (2). surl.li/zusegr

As example (1) shows, the headline informs the addressee about the transformations of the bus stop with the help of the expression *artistic makeover* which implies a set of changes intended to make the object look better (Cambridge). The photo shows a covered structure with painted images depicting people and scenery, making the shelter look more impressive. Thus, the photo serves as a visual proof of the described event.

Intensifying type rests on the descriptive or expressive headline and emotional visual material which reinforces the impact of the linguistic units on the audience. Even a neutral headline, when combined with an appropriate image, can be perceived more emotionally or dramatically. The photo shapes the evaluative background of the news, influencing the respondent's attitude toward the event prior to reading the text. With the expressive headline dwelling on disasters, accidents, catastrophes, or some personal tragedy, the photo evokes deep emotions and a response from the addressees.

(3) *Russia hits Ukraine with rarely used Oreshnik missile in fresh strikes* (BBC, 09.01.2026)



Pic. 3. The photo to headline (3). surl.li/reomty

In the example above, the headline dwells on the attack of the aggressor, designated by the units *Russia hits*, *Oreshnik missile* and *fresh strikes* which all conjure up negative images in the minds of the readers. The photo, add below the headline, illustrates the result of the attack, enhancing the emotional influence on the addressee. In this way, the verbal component sets the general framework for perception, while the photo helps the recipient to interpret it correctly.

Contrastive type is characterized by a partial or complete mismatch between the headline and the photo. The image may not correspond to the

emphasis set by the headline, or even contradict it, as verbal and visual components enter a certain semantic tension. This technique prompts the addressee to refer to the text body to clarify the context.

(4) *The hospitals where waiting times are getting worse. Is yours one of them?* (BBC, 20.01.2026)



Pic. 4. Photo to headline (4). surl.li/hkqcoj

In example (4), the headline reveals the information about problems with medical help in the UK, expressed by the units' *hospitals*, naming the institutions, *waiting times*, indicating a period of standing in a queue while waiting for medical treatment [13], and *getting worse*, implying its deterioration. In contrast, the photo shows doctors performing an operation which should identify active work and medical assistance. Thus, the correlation between the headline and the image is confusing, luring the addressee to read the text body.

In the next example, the contrast is even bigger:

(5) *Wage growth slows as number of people employed falls* (BBC, 20.01.2026)



Pic. 5. Photo to headline (5). surl.lu/jgmaqx

As you can see in (5), the headline reports about the problems with pay rise, denoted by the expression *wage growth slows*, and job losses, designated by the phrase *number of people employed falls*. However, the photo shows a

bar, with alcohol and glasses in the foreground and a female bartender in the background. So, the image is hardly an illustration of the employment crisis. In this case, we have a contrastive correlation between the headline and the photo.

Conclusions. The analysis has confirmed that the headline and the photo function as interconnected elements of a single multimodal complex that shapes the initial perception of a news text. A photo is a powerful tool of creating a deep and lasting impression on the audience, it verifies the text, serving as a proof of the event. The inter-

action of the verbal and visual components of a news text may complement each other, facilitate the understanding of the described situation or contradict each other, prompting the reader to refer to the text body and thus gather the full information.

Further research presupposes the analysis of the correlation between linguistic units and other multilingual material, including graphs and video. Besides, it makes sense to investigate which transformations are used when translating original news texts into Ukrainian.

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