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HYPERBOLE AS A STRATEGY OF GAINING NEW READERS ON THE EXAMPLE OF INFORMATION WEB PORTAL

Grazyna Filip

Rzeszów University,

al. Rejtana 16c, Rzeszów, Poland

e-mail: gfilip@ur.edu.pl

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2564-1205>

The purpose of the article is analysis of hiperbole determinants as a mechanism of building headlines in a specified information internet portal. Observations are held from a pragmalinguistic perspective, while taking into consideration both semantic, as well as perlocutive potential of words that serve for exaggerating matters signalised in headlines of published articles. The observed material's source is polish information portal, which headlines, via Google application, are shown on smartphone's display as suggestions called «Articles for you». Because of the frequency and number of displayed titles, as well as repeatability of schemes, the material basis is limited to texts published in January 2019. Combination of means for realisation of assumptions made by the portal's creators with the determinants of the term *information*, which functions in linguistic press studies, confirms the common nowadays tendency to give up objectivism for making the message more attractive. Perlocution is closely related to the commercial character of the internet website which declares to be informative. The mechanism of building titles that is presented in this article has universal character no matter what is the subject of delivered information. It is used both in reference to social, economical, political matters (the subject of Russia's aggression on Ukraine was not raised in the analysed material¹), as well as the pop-cultural ones. That is because hyperbole is an effective and attractive building material of drama and sensation in general.

Key words: hyperbole, information, headlines and titles of journalistic statement, perlocution, persuasion, web portal.

The direct subject of the deliberations held here are the titles of articles published on Polish Web portal Piki.pl. According to the official information given on the portal website it is «Polish information service, in which are published information from the country and

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¹ Different aspects of this matter from the Polish linguistic point of view are analysed e.g. by Małgorzata Kułakowska. In texts called «*Terrorists, Insurrectionists, Government Forces – Ways of Nominating Participants of Conflict in Syria in Polish Internet Media; «Terrorists or Insurrectionists?» Ways of Nominating Participants of Conflict in Donbas on the Example of Headlines in Polish Media* the author

abroad. The news available on pages of the portal concerns current events, politics, economy, lifestyle and society» [14]. As the type of the website declared is genre: *internet portal*, as a kind of activity: *commercial*. The owner of the portal is Polish company HGA sp. z o.o. Basing on the subject scope shown above, the reader might expect reliable and ambitious information transfer, which – what should be emphasised – he don't have to seek for on his own, just the opposite, it's the information from Pikio.pl that seek the recipient and reach him via installed applications. The reader might not open them, he might delete them, having read only the headline. According to research held by Public Opinion Research Centre in 2017 Pikio.pl was one of the leading sources for gaining information by the Internet users [1]. Additionally, according to statistics by the company Storyclash GmbH this service remains in the top of the ranking of portals with the biggest amount of interactions (comments, shares) among the social media users (e.g. Facebook and Twitter) [14].

The article called *What's Pikio? The Truth About Pikio.pl*, built basing on interviews with executives and editors of the analysed portal, contains the following information about it:

1. The broadcast form used in the portal is described as «light and accessible, a little bit of tabloid-like character».
2. The group of recipients is people between 30 and 60 years old.
3. Between July 2017 and July 2018 the portal doubled the result of articles views from 32 to over 64 millions.
4. It offers readers information, as well as opinions.
5. According to Pikio's executives «the service is a kind of social compass, which indicates moods of the society and its thematic suits the tastes of many Poles».
6. The goal of its creators is to not reduce to only delivering «trendy information», but also popularize social charity campaigns [16].

Because of the fact that Pikio.pl declares its informative character, it is now important to precise the understanding of meaning of the term *information* in journalism. According to Maria Wojtak: «This name gains the meaning of social activity, which informs the society via means of mass communication about current or expected facts, which characterises themselves with political, economical or cultural importance. For the genological description most important are two following semantic scopes of the term. Information is quite often equated with a separate journalistic genre, called also interchangeably *news*. The term *information* relates though also to the kind of press, radio and television [also Internet, ed. G. F.] publications (so we would say nowadays – media), subordinated to the function of informing about facts and events» [12: 29-30]. The author does not individualise information as an separate press genre, pointing its elements in other genres: mention (a minimum press information), press note (extended information), press message (full

characterised the titles of the articles in which appear names of conflicts participants. She proved, that in the titles of information referring to conflicts in Donbas, the anti-Ukraine side is negatively assessed, e.g. *terrorists*, *separatists*. These names are often additionally described with adjectives *pro-Russian*, *Russian*. The usage of such expressions suggests taking the Ukrainian (especially in the case of the name *terrorists*) or western point of view while creating the media view of world. Rarely appeared the neutral name *rebels*. In pro-Russian niche media appeared on the other hand expressions, that created the positive view of forces that fought for separating eastern regions from Ukraine, e.g. positively characterised noun *insurrectionists*, which – as M. Kułakowska remarks – was in the intention of authors meant to be an equivalent of the name *opolczęncy* used in the Russian political discourse [3, 4].

information), announcement (information about information and an advertisement of information), press silhouette (information about a person), press comment (an interpreted information), feuilleton (camouflaged information), press interview (information written as a dialogue), report (illustrated information) [12].

The researcher emphasises that journalists are expected to be objective or at least to seem that their message is impartial, but this conditions are hard to achieve because of the tendency common nowadays, to make the message more attractive, to surprise or shock the reader and also because of linking information with entertainment. The other postulates of information – called by Maria Wojtak as factual pact – are: authenticity and reliability, timeliness, clearness and precision of expression [12: 31]. For the needs of analysis held here important is the directive about the layout of contents mentioned by the cited author: «information are build on the rule of an upside-down pyramid, so with bringing the most important information to the fore» [12: 33]. Headlines of portal described by its creators as informative are built according to this rule. One can have an impression, that the senders of information at Pikio.pl, being aware of the risk of rejecting/deleting the article even before its opening and reading, include the essence of the information in the title.

Lexeme *headline* means in the Polish language ‘separated statement placed above the text, also: exhibited title in newspaper or magazine’ [7: 486]. Tabloid headlines (compare mentioned above ‘a little bit of tabloid-like character’) are Wojciech Kajtoch’s matter of interest. This author analysed headlines of tabloid newspapers «Fakt» and «Super Express» because of their rhetoric and the view of reality created by them. The author follows Walery Pisarek in defining headline as «graphically distinguished and separated from the rest of the journalistic piece (lead and its extension), placed above it (but linked with it by the essence) text, containing at least one, maximally three announcements, statements or sentences. The headline consists though of strapline, title and subtitle, subtitle and title or title alone, it is a brief, consistent communicate and it can be treated as a separate press genre. It should be distinguished from lead, from separated in frames piece of text, the title of column, section, or whole magazine» [2: 119-120].

In compliance with Maria Wojtak’s observations, also journalists who publish texts in analysed service, follow the rule that orders to use short titles, most often in the form of nominal sentence or a simple sentence. Such formulated titles have three basic functions:

- nominative – title names the journalists statement,
- summarising – title presents text/its essence,
- pragmatic – title influences on reader, holds reader’s attention, encourages him to the lecture, convinces to the expressed opinions, intrigues, entertains, etc. [13: 18-19].

Following the mentioned author I assume, that: «In the contemporary press statements titles become structurally and communicatively self-reliant and have mostly pragmatic function. It can be said, that in the way that press titles function, reflects a kind of paradox. On one hand, they are strictly connected to the text, on the other, they can function as self-reliant communicates. They are therefore subject to process of a specific emancipation, as well as generic determination. A statement can be ventured here, that they live their own life. They demand from a reader reading engagement, because they not only refer to various culture pieces, but create their own intertextual space, which is a combination of mutual connections both purely formal, as well as semantic» [13: 19].

Starting point for the problematic taken by me is the following statement by Maksymilian Tomanka, who represent the editorial board of Pikio.pl: «We have *catchy*

headlines and we often use them to redirect society's attention to important issues» [16] and also the invitation to cooperation published on the portal's website in the bookmark *Contact*: «Do you want to publicise something? You know something about a *shocking situation*, which requires media interest? Send an e-mail to address: naglaśniamy@pikio.pl. For sure we will take a look on your matter. Pikio.pl – one of the most popular information portals. We invite to cooperation» [15]. In the cited statements attention catchers are clearly formulated signals of sending strategy: *catchy headlines* and *shocking situations*.

The adjective *catchy* (chwytny) was created out of verb *to catch* and according to word-forming paraphrase it means 'one, that catches', which is i.a. 'convincing, gaining approval' [7: 108]. In its morphological structure it has though solidified meaning of operation: *catchy* 'adjusted to catch, having an ability to catch' [7: 109]. In the lexical resource of Polish language functions also the adjective *catchy* (chwytny) in the meaning of i.a. 'one, that easily finds reverberation, convinces someone' e.g.: *catchy idea, catchy slogans* [7: 108]. While in the word-forming paraphrase of the word *catchy* (chwytny) solidified is operation, in the case of second *catchy* (chwytny) – the ability to perform action, to which points the base, which is the verb *to catch*. It may be the reason why the portal's editor chose the first adjective to describe headlines used in the service. This form, via the associations with expressions like *catchy hand* suggests bigger effectiveness of operation. The analysed word is associated also with the noun *catch* 'aware move, smart way, sophisticated mean' [7: 108], i. a. rhetorical. Wojciech Kajtoch, cited previously, describes the methods of catching readers attention used in headlines exactly as a catalogue of catches.

The expression *shocking situations* – inviting service's users to co-creating it – contains a form of present participle, created from verb *to shock*, meaning 'raise rampageous, infavourable emotions; to move, to excite' e.g. events that are shocking public opinion [7: 84].

One of the ways of fulfilling such signalised strategy of gaining readers is hyperbole, which is «presenting some phenomenon exaggerating its appearance, meaning, action and influence». According to the cited here definition by Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska hyperbole is listed among figures of speech, but it is though not considered as a specialized stylistic lead, but it can be an effect of synergy of different leads and figures, expressively featured lexis and intonation. Using it was an expression of speaker's or poet's strong emotional engagement and was aiming to create analogical reaction in recipients. In more simple form hyperbole appears also in the colloquial style, what can be confirmed by idiomatic phrases like: *to burst with laughter, to die of tiredness, to go crazy of happiness, to burn with impatience* [6: 182].

Barbara Sobczak, when characterising luridness as one of the ways for catching and keeping attention in tabloids, gives examples of headlines based on hyperbole and marked lexis: «Circus in parliament!; Huge scandal! Majdan free, other would be in jail!; Horror at Głogowska!; Blood thirsty beasts can soon reach the capital!» [8: 101]. Hyperbole in trivial situations is pointed also by Wojciech Kajtoch while he analyses their graphic, semantic and textual methods of creation. The author pays attention e.g. that «the effect of overemphasising and exultation is enhanced by the pursuance to precise highlighting of detail, specific for journalists» [2: 124, 126].

This feature of journalists message can hardly be used in reference to portal which uses the strategy of shocking. Overemphasis is used here mostly in order to create rampageous emotions in portal users. In this purpose used are i.a. syntax constructions that base on marked lexical units. These are representative examples:

1. *Storm* – ‘rampageous, emotional reaction for something; strong, contradictory emotions’ [7: 85]. In the second example listed below this noun is nota bene collated with verb *to overdo* ‘exaggerate in something, overemphasise something’ [7: 677]. The article refers to outfit of Polish celebrity.

«Storm around TVN’s spring schedule! Audience can’t believe.»

«This time she overdid?! Storm around Małgorzata Rozenek.»

2. *Fire* – ‘rampageous emotional state, passion, lust, verve’ [7: 557].

«Agata Duda in the fire of criticism! It was about First Lady’s salary.»

3. *Hard to believe in something/not be able to believe/something is unbelievable* – ‘hard to believe, improbable, something is improbable’ [11: 690].

«President’s daughter is breathtakingly BEAUTIFUL! It’s hard to believe, what she does with her life».

«Jarosław Gowin honestly about alcohol. Poles can’t believe».

«Na Wspólnej: Unbelievable! Sister of the series’ star is the most popular Polish actress».

4. *Something staggers the imagination* – ‘someone is unable to understand something, something is hard to believe in’ [9: 665].

«We know the SHOCKING, TRUE identity of the assassin from WOŚP. It staggers...».

5. *Something knackers out* – ‘something leaves someone exhausted, enervates, enfeebles someone’ [10: 386].

«How much does Andrzej Duda earn? President’s salary knackers out».

6. *Something leaves someone speechless* – ‘someone fell silent because of an intense experience’ [7: 473]. In the analysed headlines this meaning is evoked by verbs *to boggle* ‘to lose temporarily the ability to speak as a result of intense experience, stress’ [7: 569] or *to be dumbfounded* – ‘someone went totally silent, someone is silent’ [11: 933].

«Tomasz Komenda’s horror is still on. The court’s shocking decision leaves speechless».

«Magda Gessler just STRIKED fans. Well-wishers are speechless».

«Jeden z dziesięciu: Spectators left speechless! Tadeusz Szuk wasn’t saying it about himself».

«We went speechless. Media: Głapiński’s assistant owes everything to Martyna Wojciechowska».

«Spectators dumbfounded! Former prime minister lost his temper in a LIVE programme».

7. *Something tears heart* – heart breaks, aches etc. ‘someone experience the feeling of grief, sadness, etc.’ [11:199].

«The sight of Andrzej Lepper’s grave tears heart!».

8. *Battle* – as a lexeme with mostly one from a couple of dictionary meanings: ‘action aiming to achieve, gain, keep something’ [7: 881], also with adjunct which shows the character and stage of action in the verbal noun *pitched battle*. In the final position of the second headline there is a hyperbolic participle *devastating* which means ‘huge, scary, overwhelming’ [9: 461].

«Pitched battle for Polsat’s deceased star’s money still on. Horrifying reports».

«Julia Wieniawa starts the battle with Królikowski. Specialists opinion is devastating».

9. *Big* and *huge* – adjectives from the semantic field of size and intensity, presented as a synonyms in the general dictionary of Polish language [7: 559, 896].

«Robert Janowski breaks the silence. Musician’s big transformation».

«Andrzej Duda called an urgent meeting of all parties. Huge crisis after the assassination...».

«Anna Jantar's death still arouses huge emotions. New details of the tragic death».

«Magda Gessler's huge tragedy. Her daughter can be left with nothing».

10. Adjectives of mostly negative character – *sensational* 'arousing sensation, arousing strong surprising impression' [7: 747], *scary* 'very bad, awful' [7: 209], *hideous* 'very ugly, appalling, disgusting' [7: 560].

«Sensational behind-the-scenes of Lara Gessler's divorce! Things will get hot».

«Scary diseases and debts of Polish Olympic medallist. Immediate help needed».

«TRAGIC comment by Andrzej Duda after the attack on Paweł Adamowicz».

«Government urgently sent a plane for Adamowicz's wife. The situation looks TRAGIC».

«Hideous words in TVP after Paweł Adamowicz's death».

«TVP breaks the records of embarrassment! Hideous manipulations enraged spectators».

For a contrast to the series of examples shown above, cited here can be some – not having the features of hyperbole – headlines from the service Plotek.pl, which are also displayed via Google application, parallel to the shown above:

«The duchess Kate organised a private birthday party. She didn't invite neither Harry, nor Meghan».

«Joanna Kulig amazed on the Critics Choice Awards gala. Actress stood sideways and shown pregnancy curves».

«Kurdej-Szatan's daughter eternalized the picture of her parents' vacation tenderness. They look like teenagers in love!».

«WOŚP 2019. Photograph of Anna Przybylska with children auctioned for big sum!».

In the article presented is one of the ways of building headlines in the internet portal declaring informative activity. Not all the headlines of this service contains though the hyperbole. Here are some examples from the page itself:

«Gowin comments Kaczyński's tapes! He revealed what's ground-breaking in them».

«Pope Francesco will be asking for forgiveness. Touching declaration».

«Martyniuk's son with a mysterious lady. He showed her accidentally».

«Ms Tyszkiewicz should host »Projekt Lady«. We will remember her advises on being a lady forever».

«Policeman Tomasz Marszałkowski kicked WOŚP participants. He just got promoted».

«Katarzyna Dowobor next to Magda Gessler? They have much in common».

Analysed are though not only the headlines displayed on smartphone's screen as a suggestions of «Articles for you». It must be pointed, that with deleting titles, without opening them, they stop being sent. No matter what is the subject of information signalised this way, in nearly every headline used was a lexical unit (lexeme or phrasal verb) in hyperbole function. Contents hyperbole is supplemented by typical in this function graphic signs and editorial methods – exclamation mark and majuscules. Creators of the service are aware of hyperbole's perlocutive power and this is why such kind of titles are displayed on the screens. It is an element of strategy of gaining new readers and in the same way raising the statistics of article views. Hyperbole is the material of sensation understood as 1) 'strong impression, big interest caused by an unexpected message, event, etc.; 2) 'message, event which causes such interest' [7: 747]. Overemphasised events can be attractive for a

reader, but he wouldn't like to experience them, aside from the cases of aberration. Iwona Nowakowska-Kempa, when analysing the metaphor of feelings, writes about the emotional space of an individual, in which placed are diminutive and augmentative. Closeness of the object of affection releases in human the want for letting someone/something in his private space by reducing its size, because human doesn't feel endangered by this object. Such is the motivation of creating diminutives and hypocoristic. By expanding, in turn, negative objects and events are pushed out of the emotional space or even not let in [5: 49]. In this way the world created by analysed article headlines functions as a fiction attractive to be read, not threatening the users of the service. This is because the *storm* mentioned at the beginning of the text most often takes place in a *glass of water* and according to the meaning of this phrasal verb is 'a reaction too strong in relation to the reasons that caused it' [7: 86].

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ГІПЕРБОЛІЗАЦІЯ ЯК СТРАТЕГІЯ ЗАЛУЧЕННЯ ЧИТАЧІВ НА ПРИКЛАДІ ІНФОРМАЦІЙНОГО ІНТЕРНЕТ-ПОРТАЛУ

Гражина Філіп

Жешувський університет

алея Рейтана, 16с, Жешув, Польща

e-mail: gfilip@ur.edu.pl

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2564-1205>

У статті зроблено спробу проаналізувати детермінанту гіперболи як механізму побудови заголовків матеріалів у зазначеному інформаційному інтернет-порталі. Спостереження здійснено з позицій прагматичної лінгвістики, зважаючи як на семантичний, так і на перлокутивний потенціал слів, що веде до перебільшення тем з допомогою заголовкової частини опублікованих текстів. Об'єктом наукової статті є польський інформаційний портал, заголовки якого за допомогою інтернет-програми Google відображаються на дисплеї смартфона у вигляді пропозицій під назвою «Статті для вас». Через частоту та кількість відображуваних заголовків, а також повторюваність комбінацій, мало місце хронологічне обмеження досліджуваних текстів січнем 2019 року. У роботі припущено, що творці інформаційних порталів у гонитві за привабливістю для споживачів інформації нерідко нехтують об'єктивністю. Це вже навіть стало тенденцією. Механізм побудови заголовків, представлений у цій статті, має універсальний характер незалежно від того, що є предметом поширення різноманітної інформації (соціальної, економічної, політичної (хоча тут не висвітлювалася тема агресії Росії проти України), поп-культури). Відтак, гіпербола є ефективним і привабливим механізмом побудови драми і сенсації взагалі.

Ключові слова: гіпербола, інформація, заголовки, заголовки журналістських публікацій, перлокуція, переконання, веб-портал.