Investigation of Mandarin Clickbait Headlines:
A Case Study of *Biàn Zhèyàng*

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Abstract

With the progress of Internet technology, the ways how news are composed and spread have changed. Nowadays, the click rate of the online news has been used in evaluating the popularity of media platform. Therefore, headlines are now presented with the intent to attract from more 'clicks' from the readers. Given this phenomenon, this research aims to investigate the linguistic techniques employed in Mandarin headlines. The clickbait manifestations of topics, word choices, and presentation patterns will be presented in the result. The results suggested that topics related to appearance and celebrities were often the target of using clickbait headlines. Furthermore, forward-referent serves as one of the techniques to lure the readers to click on the news. Writers' presuppositions were often hidden using positive or negative words in the headlines. Such presuppositions often affect the emotions of the readers upon reading the news. Finally, two- and three- phrase/sentence headlines with various patterns were found. Our study provided a detailed analysis of semantic and pragmatic uses of clickbait headlines, an aspect not often seen in past linguistic analysis of Mandarin news.

Keywords: *clickbait*, news *headlines*, *biàn zhèyàng, forward-referent, presupposition*

1 Introduction

With the widespread of Internet technology, the ways how news were composed and spread have changed. This change is having serious effects on news media business. Chen et al.(2015:1) reported that "the online media economy is largely based around monetization of "views" through advertising revenue" and because of this, "clicks and page views translate directly to a dollar amount". This phenomenon leads to issues such as disguises of news information in headlines by use of non-specific referents, questioning techniques, etc., (Blom and Hansen, 2015; Chen et al, 2015) most of which could be seen as 'clickbait'.

In the Oxford Online Dictionary[1], a 'clickbait' is defined as "Internet content whose main purpose is to encourage users to follow a link to a web page, esp. where that web page is considered to be of low quality or value." With the purpose to attract a larger number of clicks, editors (or sub-editors) and writers employed various techniques in the news headlines to attract a number of readers, sometimes regardless of the decrease of news quality (Chen et al, 2015; Liliana et al, 2015).

In Mandarin online news platforms, it is not hard to find clickbait in news headlines. For example, sentence (1) presupposed that the audience knew about the 325 billion dollars' news, although this could also be a bait because people who did not know it would want to know more about it by clicking it.

(1) 被　川普　3250　億　美元　新聞　嚇　醒
　　 bèi chuānpǔ 3,250 yì　měiyuán xīnwén xià xǐng
　　 BEI Trump 325 billionsUSD news scarewake
　　 下　週一　　　台股　聚焦　這 件 事
　　 xià zhōuyī　　táigǔ　jùjiāo zhè jiàn shì
　　 next Monday Taiwan stock focus this CL thing

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[1] URL: https://www-oed-com.autorpa.lib.nccu.edu.tw/view/Entry/37263110?redirectedFrom=clickbait#eid (Retrieve date: 2019.05.22)

'Due to the shock of the 325 billion dollars news from Trump, this thing should be noticed by Taiwan stock market next Monday'

Second, the sentence did not give any hint about 'this thing'. Readers' curiosity was provoked by the covert of a definite and specific referent, although this referent is non-referring to the readers (Givon, 1978; 1995). This is somehow violating the rules of definiteness and markedness. When we have an object that is definite and specific such as *She wanted to buy this house* versus one that is indefinite and non-specific (*She wanted to buy house*) (cf. Givon, 1995: 61), the former should be a referring-object, while the latter is a non-referring one. The news headline is the first thing that appears in a news article. It is very unlikely that information in it could be referring unless it has been mentioned previously. The use of 'this thing should be noticed' entailed that the writer knew about this thing but did not make it clear to the readers on purpose. It is this manipulation of curiosity that helps increase the number of clicks. Sentence (2) shows a similar kind.

(2) **10 種** 食物 不 能 放 冰箱
   shí zhŏng   shíwù bù néng fàng bīngxiāng
   10 CL   food   not can put refrigerator
   'Ten kinds of food can't be placed in the fridge'

Sentence (2) provided numeral information -- '10 things' but the number did not provide sufficient information for the readers to know more about the ten things. This kind of technique often appears in book titles. The difference is that this headline is in interrogative form, indicating the writer's unconfirmed source of information. An interrogative headline is also used as a way to avoid commitment so that any reports that turn out to be challenged or incorrect will not be penalized by the news administrative body.

This paper intends to investigate a different kind of clickbait -- the type that appeared fairly recently-- *biàn zhèyàng* 'change to become as such' or 'become like this'. It is the manipulation of one's curiosity by indicating 'a change in something' that deserves their attention. *Biàn* is an 'inchoative' or 'become' verb (cf. Jakendoff, 1990; McCawley, 1971) that mean 'change', whereas *zhèyàng* means 'this or so' or 'as such'. *Zhèyàng*

does not clearly describe any detail about the content of news. According to Biq (2007:130), a study of *nà*, the opposite of *zhe4* 'this', *nà* has a 'detached' meaning that shows " 约 似 (approximation)" and " 模 糊 的 认 定 (vague identification)". *Zhè*, which should be less detached than *nà* was however used to mean roughly a similar meaning with *na4yang4* in the news headlines, but with more definiteness.

(3) 30 年 後 世界 變 這樣
   30 nián hòu shìjiè   biàn zhèyàng
   30 year after world become this
   '30 years later the world will become like this'

However definite, because *zhèyàng* is vague in content, the news headline still becomes opaque and mysterious. Blom and Hansen (2015) have also discussed the Danish headlines with *sådan* and *så*, both meaning 'like so' or 'this is how'. The paper suggested that these forward-reference words make information gaps between headlines and the origin articles for purpose to trap readers into clicking into the articles.

Since this phenomenon seems to have become a globalized issue, it is essential to look closely at our news headlines. The main purpose of this study is to gain understanding of clickbait headlines in Mandarin and their distributions and types. The following research questions will be answered:

1. What topic of news often employ *biàn zhèyàng* as clickbait to attract readers' attention?
2. What language features are used in Mandarin clickbait headlines?
3. What pragmatic functions are manipulated in *biàn zhèyàng* clickbaits?

Based on the above questions, this study will provide an analysis of *biàn zhèyàng* in Taiwan news headlines.

2   Literature Review

The topic of the news articles is one of the leading factors influencing how many clicks the news will get. Journalism has distinguished different types of hard and soft news. Hard news is considered more society-beneficial, while soft news is often related with tabloidization and 'infotainment' (Reinemann et al. 2012; Lin, 2016; Otto, Glogger, and Boukes, 2017; Skovgarrd,

2014). In recent years, online news has become softer and softer. Unlike the traditional tabloid, which was said to include sex, scandal, tragedy, paranormal, supernatural phenomena, outrageous behavior, how-to-tips on self-improvement, household tasks, information about celebrities, physical deformities or freakish physical accomplishments (Schaffer and Deborah, 1995), Reinemann et al. (2012) discovered that soft news was more episodic and less politically relevant. Moreover, soft news frequently reported personal and private events, although the news topics could be about politics (Jebril, Albaek, and De Vreese, 2013).

For the soft news, the number of clicks was not only affected by the news topics, but also the effect of word choice in the headlines. Word choices of news headlines would catalyze readers' curiosity or suspense. Reinemann et al. (2012) mentioned that commercialized news was now compiled in personal and emotional style. Plenty of personal elements and emotional words can be found in the text to stimulate growth of clicking rate (Bednarek and Caple, 2017; Bednarek, 2006). Yet, scholars such as Bas and Grabe (2015) found that emotion-provoking news may increase clicking rate but did nothing good to close the knowledge gap.

In addition, employing anaphora in headline is another technique to making larger click number. Blom and Hansen (2015) found that Danish headlines frequently used forward-references. Eight manifestations of forward-references in Danish headlines were found, including demonstrative pronouns, personal pronouns, adverbs, definite articles, ellipsis of obligatory arguments, imperatives with implicit deictic reference, interrogatives, and general nouns with deictic reference. These kinds of words were used as triggers of presuppositions about the original articles which made readers fascinated about the content of the news. The research "confirmed that forward-referring headlines are primarily used as clickbait luring the readers into clicking on and reading the full article thus making the news site more attractive for advertisers" (Blom and Hansen, 2015: 98-99).

As mentioned, words used in the headlines also carry certain presuppositions. A presupposition is proposition that the speaker believed but not uttered. Bonyadi and Samual

(2013) analyzed headlines in New York Times and Tehran Times and found that existential presupposition and lexical presupposition were constantly found. They suggested that existential presuppositions brought negative attributes in headlines, such as 'stolen election' or 'belated truth', while lexical presupposition revealed strong positive or negative inclination. With the powerful positive or negative connotation words, "the writers tried to presuppose their intended propositions" (Bonyadi and Samual, 2013: 4).

On top of the above, organizing stories in different order of plots also instigate different readers' reactions. Knobloch et al. (2004) testified readers' reflection from various narrative patterns, including linear, reversal, and invert types. The linear pattern represented the stories in chronological order. The reversal patterns presented the stories in reverse order. The invert type of writing was profoundly used and was considered professional in news writing. This type put most important event and outcome in the initial part of the story, remaining less essential elements at the end. The empirical evidences of their research suggested that the linear type of writing evoked more suspense than other two types but higher curiosity in reaction was found in the reversal narratives.

To sum up, with the intent to stimulate click rates, selecting appealing topics, choosing words with presupposition, and using different ways to organize the headlines were some of the common techniques used to increase the click number of news. These methods were seen as measures of clickbait. From analyzing the headline of German news, Kuiken et al. (2017) offered the features of clickbait. Clickbait features included questions, negative words, quotes, signal words, pronouns, and numbers. They testified that using features of the clickbait in headlines significantly increased the number of clicks.

However, the above studies were mainly analyzing western language headlines. In our discussion, we need to take account of the features of Mandarin headlines. Hsieh and Li (2011) suggested that because of the limitation of newspaper space and the immediateness of news, Mandarin headlines usually only contain two short sentences, and 12.7 words on average. The reduction of the sentences and words leads to the simplification of the complete information and the

fragment of the whole meaning. Analyzing the content of two short sentences in headlines on TV, they discovered that these sentences showed five main patterns -- [EVENT + OUTCOME], [EVENT + EVENT], [EVENT + QUESTION], [COMMENT +EVENT], and [EVENT+ REASON]. The expression of [EVENT + OUTCOME] is a cause-effect relationship, which is the core of the news. Therefore, the frequency of this structure is the highest of all the headlines in the research. The [EVENT + EVENT] pattern provides details of the news, whereas [EVENT + QUESTION] shows uncertainty of the event, which also fulfils the neutral and justified role of the media. The [COMMENT + EVENT] pattern adds subjective opinion onto the headlines. The [EVENT+ REASON] pattern shows that the media understand the event well. These patterns of the headlines reveal what kind of perspective the editors would like to give the audience. Hsieh and Li (2011) mainly worked on the headlines on TV. The analysis of the Mandarin clickbait headline patterns will be demonstrated in session 4.3.

In addition, in order to simplify headlines, some methods were often adopted. For example, function words, classifiers, and second verbs were either removed or added on purpose. Using pivotal sentences and ungrammatical sentences was also part of the strategies to make headlines simplified. Furthermore, to increase readers' curiosity, it is also common to use connotation-rich vocabulary, first name of celebrities, well-known nicknames, pseudo-quotes, and literary poetic devices in Mandarin headlines. In what follows, we present the results of our study.

3   Methodology

Headlines containing the keyword *biàn zhèyàng* in Mandarin were collected. Such news concealed the outcome of what have changed. By not revealing detail of the information, readers' curiosity could be stimulated and thus increased the click rate. Through gathering and investigating headlines with *biàn zhèyàng*, this paper attempts to figure out how Mandarin clickbait headlines entice the readers to click on the headlines. Google News was employed to retrieve the headlines due to its tremendous database. The headlines mostly came from main online news platforms in Taiwan; for instance, *China Times*, *Ettoday*, and *United Daily*

News. The data was collected in every five days from April to May in 2019. There were 57 tokens news articles altogether. The news types, keywords, and patterns of the collected data were analyzed in order to find out the techniques of Mandarin clickbait headlines.

4   Analysis

This research observed three aspects of headlines, namely the topics of news, keywords in the headlines, and the patterns of headlines.
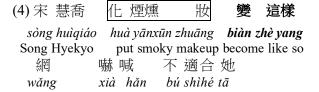
4.1   Topics of News

All of the news articles were analyzed in terms of their topics. Based on the study Schaffer et al. (1995) had accomplished, the collected data were categorized into eight topic types, namely 'appearance', 'celebrity', 'outrageous', 'new policy', 'scandal', 'sex', 'spatiotemporal', and 'how-to-tips'. The results are given in Table 1.

Topics of News	Freq.	%
Appearance	22	35.48
Celebrity Privacy	21	33.87
New Policy	8	12.91
Outrageous	4	6.45
How-to-Tips	3	4.84
Sex	2	3.23
Spatiotemporal	1	1.61
Others	1	1.61
Total	**62**	**100**

Table 1. Topics of Headlines

A majority of the headlines of *biàn zhèyàng* was the topic of appearance. This topic contained outlook changing of people's faces and people's figures. In addition, there are more than one third of appearance headlines contain well-known names (8 out of 22). With the topic of appearance, the writer drew the viewers' attention by making them curious about how a famous someone's outlook had become, or how had he or she changed. Sentence (4) and (5) are instances of 'Appearance'

(4) 宋 慧喬　　化 煙燻　　妝　　變　這樣
　　sòng huìqiáo　huà yānxūn zhuāng　biàn zhè yang
　　Song Hyekyo　put smoky makeup become like so
　　網　　嚇 喊　　不 適合 她
　　wăng　xià hăn　bú shìhé tā

Netizens   scared call   not suit her
'Hyekyo Song put on smoky makeup and <u>became like this</u>; terrified netizens called out and said this did not suit her'

(5)56 歲　　　　關 之琳　　　發福 變 這樣
56 suì　　guān zhīlín　　fāfú biàn zhèyàng
56 year-old Rosamund Kwan fat become like so
'56 years old Rosamund Kwan <u>became</u> fat <u>like this</u>.'

Like sentence (4) which provided the hint as to how disfavored Song would look, sentence (5) also stated the recent gain of body weight by a well-known beautiful actress. These news reported the negative change of the actresses but sentence (4) had a better connotation than sentence (5), for the headline told specifically that it was the makeup that did not suit the actress (not the actress' problem). It is a constant trick of the media to report weight gain or weight loss of the celebrities, which appeared to be a matter of seriousness to the celebrities.

Topic of celebrity privacy was the second highest among the headlines. These headlines often contained the full name of well-known people and were concerned about changes of their personal relationships, or their unknown privacy. For headlines that pointed to appearance per se were grouped under 'Appearance'. Sentence (6) is an example of celebrity privacy.

(6) 許志安 痛哭　懺悔
xǔzhì'ān tòngkū cànhuǐ
Andy Hui cry-hard repent
鄭　秀文　臉書　　封面
zhèng xiùwén liǎngshū fēngmiàn
Sammi Cheng Facebook page
竟　　　變　這樣
jìng　　biàn zhèyàng
surprisingly become this.
'Andy Hui blubbered and repented; Sammi Cheng Sau Man's Facebook page <u>became like this</u>.'

The boxed lexical items indicate the theme (Facebook background) rather than the reason in which something had changed. It is slightly different from the examples in (4) and (5).The 'Policy' type as in (7) below conveys changes after a new policy had been implemented.

(7) 莫迪　經濟 學　　實施　五 年 後
mòdí　jīngyìxué　shíshī　wǔ nián hòu

Modi economics implement five year after
印度 經濟 變　這樣
yìndù jīngjì biàn zhèyàng
India economy become so
'After the implementation of Modi's economy policy for five years; the economy of India <u>became like this</u>.'

The boxed lexical items indicate the theme (economy respectively) in which something had changed like the boxed item in sentence (7). Examples of 'Outrageous' headlines contained events that evoked negative emotions, such that in (8) below.

(8) 夏語心 遭 鎖門　討 10 倍　　　車資
Xià Yǔxīn zāo zuǒmén tǎo 10 bèi　　chēzi
Xia yuxin got locked request 10 times taxi fare
曾　　國城　　聽完　結局 變 這樣！
Zēng Guóchéng tīngwán jiéjú biàn zhèyàng
Zeng listened outcome became like this.
'Xia got locked and asked for ten times taxi fare; after Zeng listened and the outcome <u>became like this</u>.'

This kind of headline first told what the 'unbelievable' act was. The first part often triggered anger or negative emotion from the readers; the second part then lured the readers to click on the news. In many cases, *biàn zhèyàng* was used to introduce how people in the events had become. It is often an exaggeration of the real, often tiny outcome. Bednarek (2008: 67) listed six "core evaluative parameters" for evaluation of the press, namely 'comprehensibility', 'emotivity', 'expectedness', 'importance', 'possibility/necessity', and 'reliability'. Clickbait news fall short of many of these but may be high in 'emotivity'.

On the other hand, 'How-to-Tips' type of headlines used *biàn zhèyàng* to show the readers what had happened after using the tips that the headline had mentioned (9). Example (10) shows *biàn zhèyàng* was used to mark the unknown future ('Spatiotemporal').

(9) 夫妻 例行 開　週會　生活　變　這樣
fūqī lìxíng kāi zhōuhuì shēnghuó biàn zhèyàng
spouse hold week meeting life　become like so
'Spouse meet every week; marriage life <u>becomes like this</u>.'

(10) 30 年 後的世界 **變** 這樣：
*30 nián hòu de shìjiè **biàn zhèyàng***
30 year after de world become like so
你的鞋、你的車
nǐ de xié 、nǐ de chē
your shoes your car
你的內衣比你還 聰明
nǐ de nèiyī bǐ nǐ hái cōngmíng
'The world will <u>become like this</u> after 30 years; your shoes, your cars, and your underwear will be smarter than you.'

One 'Others' example was found because the news reported an event that someone did crazy things and was caught by police.

In the next section, the keywords in the headlines will be analyzed.

4.2 Forward-Referent and Presupposition

Forward-referents such as 'like so' or 'this is how' leave information gaps between headlines and the origin articles. They are often employed in headlines to affect the number of clicks. Presuppositions in headline also have an impact on how the audience would interpret the story. This section provides our analysis of keywords.

All the headlines with *biàn zhèyàng* utilized the forward-referent *zhèyàng*. However, most of the referents of *biàn zhèyàng* in the headlines were also forward-reference words such as pronouns, or non-previously introduced nick names, etc. The number of forward-reference words used in as the subjects of *biàn zhèyàng* was calculated. Table 2 shows the counts and percentages of each label.

Forward-Referents	Freq.	%
General Noun (結局 'results', MV)	24	38.7
Full Name (邱品叡)	17	27.42
Modifier+ general noun (正妹老婆 'pretty.girl-wife')	15	24.19
Nick Name (小馮 'little Feng', 阿帕契姐 'Sister AH-64 Apache')	2	3.23
Pronoun (他 'he')	2	3.23
Zero anaphora	2	3.23
Total	**62**	**100**

Table 2. Forward-Referents in Headlines

From Table 2, 38.7% referents of *biàn zhèyàng* were general nouns, and another 24.19% were of 'modifier+general noun'. There was no clue as to know what the specific thing of the 'general noun' was. Therefore, it encourages the readers to read the whole article.

The full names were usually the name of well-known persons. The persons themselves were more attractive than what really happened to them. A total of 27.42% used the person's full names, while only less than 10% used pronouns and zero anaphora. For pronouns and zero anaphora, they were used for a reason. In (11), a pronoun is used to conceal the core information which refers to the main love rival of the female star. This technique might lead to higher click rate. For (12), a zero anaphora was missing because it was referring to oneself (the speaker).

(11) 周 慧敏 頭號 情敵 是 她
zhōu Huìmǐn tóuhào qíngdí shì tā
Vivian Chow main love rival is her.
51歲 單身 港姐 **變 這樣**
*51 suì dānshēn gǎngjiě **biàn zhèyàng***
51 year-old single Ms. Hong Kong become this.
'Vivian Chow's main love rival is her. 51 year-old Ms. Hong Kong <u>became like this</u>.'

(12) 受過 國民 黨 教育
shòuguò guómín dǎng jiàoyù
received KMT education
館長 嘆：Ø 怎麼 變 這樣
*Guǎnzhǎng tàn Ø zěnme **biàn zhèyàng***
Curator sigh : Ø why become this
'Educated by KMT, the curator sighed: why Ø <u>became like this</u>'

As for presupposition-identifying, Mandarin clickbait headlines often used exaggerating, sensational words to attract viewers' attention. Some of these words reveal the author's presupposition. Here is one of the examples to show this phenomenon.

(13) 昔日 龍 女郎 爆 肥 80 公斤
xírì lóng nǔláng bào féi 80 kōngjīn
past dragon lady exploding fat 80 kilogram
靠 這 招 甩 肉 **變 這樣**
*kào zhè zhāo shuǎi ròu **biàn zhèyàng***
depend this method dump meat become like so
'The dragon like lady rapidly gained weight for

80 kilograms; Ø lost weight by this tip and <u>became like this</u>.'

The writer used the adverb *bào féi* 'exploding fatness' to exaggerate how fast the lady had gained weight. In addition, *lóng nǔláng* 'dragon lady' was used to describe the woman's figure in the past, which means the woman used to have a dragon like body. With these exaggerating and sensational words, readers were enticed with curiosity and lured to click on the news even if they did not know who this woman was. A comparison of a better past to a worse present is what the readers would like to read about. In addition, this headline also utilized the forward-referents. Both *lóng nǔláng* 'dragon lady' and *zhè zhāo* 'this method' hid the important elements of the story.

Words with presuppositions increased the possibility of clicking. Strong negative and positive words were used to impose the presuppositions on the audiences, regardless of whether the audience agreed or not. In our collected data, there are plenty verbs which inherited extreme emotions. For instants, '對不起 *duìbùqǐ* (sorry)', '害 *hài* (harm)', '走鐘 *zǒuzhōn* (become deformed)', '腫 *zhǒng* (swell)', '遭 *zāo* (to undergo)', '打趴 *dǎpā* (defeat)', '嘆 *tàn* (sign)', '淚崩 *lèibēng* (uncontrollably cry)', '驚恐 *jīngkǒng* (terrify)', '痛哭 *tòngkū* (bitterly cry)', '懺悔 *chànhuǐ* (repent)', 驚 *jīng* (stun)', '暴怒 *bàonù* (fury)', '爆肥 *bàoféi* (exploding fatness)', etc.

4.3 Patterns of Online News Headline

As mentioned, Mandarin headlines usually include two phrases or sentences (Hsieh and Li, 2011). From the total 62 headlines, 50 headlines (80.6%) were composed with two phrases or sentences and the remaining 12 headlines (19.4%) contained three phrases/sentences. In this part, we followed the analysis structure of Hsieh and Li (2011).

Based on the annotation system of Hsieh and Li (2011), we annotated phrases/sentences in the headlines as EVENT, REASON, OUTCOME, and COMMENT. An EVENT is the main issue that the news conveyed. Our target phrase *biàn zhèyàng* was also marked. A REASON explains why *biàn* (change) had occurred. An OUTCOME marks the part which shows the consequences of the change. A COMMENT represents the judgment or reactions

from the author, writers, editors, and others. A COMMENT is usually a response from the netizens.

(14) 掃墓　　　卻見祖墳變　　這樣
sǎomù　　què jiàn zǔfén biàn　zhèyàng,
sweep tomb　but see grave change like this
他 po　　圖　　網　　全 怒[COMMENT]
tā　pō　tú　wǎng　quán　nù
he　postpicture netizens all　angry
'He went to clean the tomb but saw the tomb <u>became like this</u>; he posted the picture and the netizens become angry'

The patterns of the two headlines are given in Table 3 below.

Pattern	Freq.	%
EVENT +*biàn zhèyàng*	22	44
Biàn zhèyàng +COMMENT	11	22
REASON + *biàn zhèyàng*	9	18
OUTCOME +*biàn zhèyàng*	2	4
biàn zhèyàng +EVENT	2	4
Biàn zhèyàng +OUTCOME	1	2
REASON and *biàn zhèyàng* + COMMENT	1	2
REASON and *biàn zhèyàng* + OUTCOME	1	2
REASON + *biàn zhèyàng* and COMMENT	1	2
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 3. Patterns of Headlines

(15) 捕獲 許 純美 落跑　　情郎 [EVENT]
bǔhuò Xǔ Cúnměi luòpǎo　qíngláng
catch Xu Cunmei runaway　boyfriend
邱 品叡 過 十年 變 這樣
qiū pǐnruì guò shínián biàn zhèyàng
Qiu Pinrui through ten years become this
'Catchinging runaway Xu's boyfriend, Qiu <u>becomes like this</u> after ten years.

(16) 不　徵 空 店 稅 [REASON]
bù zhēng kōng diàn shuì

Not levy   empty store tax
Sway 預言 東區 接 下來 **變 這樣**
Sway *yùyán dōngqū jiē xiàlái **biàn zhèyàng***
Sway predict east-area following become this
'Not levying empty-store tax, Sway predicted
that the eastern area would <u>become like this</u>.'

Sentence (15) demonstrates a pattern of [EVENT
+*biàn zhèyàng*]. The first short sentence presents a
scandal which happened about ten years ago. The
next *biàn zhèyàng* sentence conveys how the man
has become after 10 years. Example (16) is a
[REASON + *biàn zhèyàng*] sentence. The first short
sentence shows the reason of changing; the second
short sentence is the prediction of the changing
outcome, but the outcome was concealed by '*biàn
zhèyàng*', which enticing the readers to read the
full articles.

(17) 土酷   風   打趴 眾 女星 [OUTCOME]
tǔkù   fēng   dǎpā zhòng nǚxīng
local-cool   style defeat all female stsr
最 醜 女團   翻身 **變 這樣**
*zuì chou nǚtuán fānshēn **biàn zhèyàng***
ugliest   female team stand-up become this
' Local and cool style defeated all the female
stars. The ugliest girl group stands up and
<u>becomes like this</u>.'

(18) 女星   生 2 娃 **[REASON]**
nǚxīng   shēng 2 wá
female star borned 2 babies
變 這樣
biàn zhèyàng
become this
鏡子 反射 身材 太 真實
jìngzi fǎnshè shēnchái tài zhēnshí
Mirror reflect figure   too real
網   看 傻！[COMMENT]
wǎng   kàn shǎ!
netizens   watch stunned
'A star gave birth to two babies and becomes
like this. The reflection in the mirror tells the
truth; netizen were all shocked.'

The Pattern of sentence (17) is [OUTCOME +*biàn
zhèyàng*]. The first short sentence gives the
information about the outcome of the changing.
The pattern of (18) is [REASON and *biàn zhèyàng* +
COMMENT]. The first short sentence contains the
reason of changing and *biàn zhèyàng;* the second

short sentence is the reflection of the *biàn zhèyàng*
from netizens.

Reinemann et al. (2012) stated that soft news is
prone to include the journalist's personal
impressions, interpretations, and opinions. In this
research, the preponderance of the data included
comments. These comments provided more
emotional and sensational elements. Twenty-two
headlines (40%) were found to consist of
comments in all the 62 headlines. Among these,
five of them had two comments, shown in (19).

(19) 感恩   公投[COMMENT]
gǎn'ēn   gōngtóu
appreciate referendum
同志 教育 改良 版
tóngzhì jiàoyù gǎiliángbǎn
homosexual education improved version
變 這樣
Biàn zhèyàng
become so
網： 教育 部長 超 帥[COMMENT]
Wǎng: jiàoyù bùzhǎng chāo shuài
Netizens education minister super cool
'Thanks to the referendum, the improved version
of homosexual education policy <u>becomes like this</u>;
Netizens: the Minister of Education is cool.'

The pattern of sentence (19) is [COMMENT+ *biàn
zhèyàng*+ COMMENT]. The first part expressed the
author's personal opinion of the new policy
version of the homosexual education. The second
sentence used a forward-referent to evoke the
viewers' curiosity. The last comment showed the
response from the netizens, which presented the
netizens' feeling about the minister.

5   Conclusion
Our analysis demonstrated that the clickbait
headlines are used more in appearance and
celebrity topics. As a kind of Forward-Referent
technique, the use of general nouns is the most
common way to lure audience into reading the
whole articles. In addition, negative and
exaggerated words are employed in the headlines
to provoke the curiosity of the readers. Finally,
writing comments about the news is a kind of
method to increase the click rate.

This study analyzed news headlines in Mandarin
that contained a clickbait keyword *biàn zhèyàng*.
Clickbait news have increased abundantly in

recent years and readers are lured into reading them without notice. A linguistic analysis of how clickbait headlines manipulate readers' response was needed. With the commercialization of media industry, newspapers seek larger and larger click number for survival purposes. Clickbait headlines used various techniques often unknown by readers.

Our research observed that Mandarin headlines often fell into certain news topic, with certain word choice, and employed particular presentation patterns. Using forward-referents and general nouns become common although they normally violate the old-before-new discourse order. Forward-referents reveal limited information about the content. Furthermore, news writers hid their presuppositions behind negative or positive words and by doing so, readers' response could be manipulated. This study provided an analyzing schema as to how one should treat this kind of clickbait news with more caution.

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