

# ABSTRACT

Magdalena Kukulak

## **„Television headline (ticker) as a rhetorical measure in audiovisual transmission”**

Promoter: prof. dr hab. Jolanta Antas

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The aim of the work was to analyze the tickers titling journalistic materials from Polish news services as a holistic phenomenon, to distinguish the possible functions of the tickers, similarities and differences between the examined stations in titling the news, the dependence of the content of the tickers on the subject of the news and finally to analyze the type of author's elements that format the message, in contrast to plain representation of extra-linguistic reality. Material from five television programs ("Wiadomości" by TVP, "Dzisiaj" by Telewizja Republika, "Informacje dnia" by Telewizja "Trwam", "Wydarzenia" by Polsat and "Fakty" by TVN) was examined. Over a period of thirteen months, over 15,000 text units were collected in this way, which were then divided into thematic, grammatical and stylistic categories.

The analysis of the collected material showed tickers as a permanent element of each of the Polish broadcasters selected for the study. It has been assumed that in most of them (except for "Fakty" TVN, where there is a certain selectivity) each message is preceded by a headline, which is intended to introduce the recipient into the context of the journalistic material presented later, which brings it closer to the formula of a press title. Some of them, however, due to their polemical nature and encouragement to act, can be compared to a slogan.

Despite the relatively small volume, not exceeding several dozen characters, the title tickers used in Polish news programs (at least limited to five examined) are of great importance in shaping the media discourse, as well as in the process of building an interpretative community on the sender-recipient line. They owe this, on the one hand, to the prominent place on the television screen (and the lack of competition from other written messages) and being part of a news program, where the recipient expects facts, not opinions, but on the other hand, to the hidden intentions of the author, who has great possibilities of influencing a specific reception by the viewer not only of the headline itself, but also of the event discussed in the journalistic material and the entire context of this event.

As it was shown in this work, the percentage of TV headlines dominated by the representational function (an announcement of what will be told in the reportage material, and at the same time - a very brief description of the event, devoid of such an author's contribution that would significantly imply a specific interpretation) varies depending on the respondent. program and ranges from 35% in TVN, through similar values in the range of 40% - 50% for TVP, Republika and Polsat, up to 70% in Telewizja Trwam, where most often the headline remains a simple description of extra-linguistic reality. In the case of the latter broadcaster, the author's component usually appears narrowed down to specific thematic threads, which are particularly related to the pro-Catholic line of the station. In the case of TVN, on the other hand, where this percentage is the highest, it must be associated with the practice of such news titling that is associated with hidden meanings and entering into a kind of game with the recipient.

The correlation between the topic of the news and the percentage of rhetorical measures dependent on the author was also indicated, which was the highest in the case of information related to domestic politics. In other thematic categories, it was much easier to get schematic and mutual similarities of headlines from different programs. However, the number is not the only parameter that differentiates the use of author's elements in the tickers. In the analysis, attention should also be paid to the range of means used in a given program, to the consistency in evaluating phenomena and people, as well as to the lexical selection, with particular emphasis on the repeatability of the words and phrases used.

When analyzing the similarities and differences in the means of persuasive influence on the recipient, it was noticed that some of them result from the very grammatical form of the utterance. Unlike the equivalent of a sentence or a notice, a sentence with a personal form of the verb focuses the recipient's attention on the subject, which gives additional opportunities to show it as the perpetrator and responsible for positive or negative phenomena. According to this logic, in TVP's "Wiadomości" the vast majority of sentences where the agent is credited with positive action refer to the Polish government or its praise expressed by various social groups (including the largest group, defined as *Poles*). On the other hand, in regard to the opposition, in the case of TVP, all sentences described events shown as negative, which indicated *the opposition (total opposition), the Platform (Civic Platform, PO, Civic Coalition), Donald Tusk (Tusk)* as responsible. A similar distinction is also visible in the description of our country's relations with others, where unambiguously positive actions are attributed to *Poland*, while negative actions are attributed to *Brussels, the European Commission, Germany, Europe, and migrants*. A very similar, clear division into

positive and negative agents is visible in the Telewizja Republika, except that in this case the latter are presented as unspecified agents, which creates a clear opposition to the default category we (good ones, representing the right views). The existence of such an opposition can also be observed in "Wiadomości", and in both of these televisions - the catalog of positive (us) and negative (they) values is linked to the broadcaster's perception of a given phenomenon.

A clear division into good and bad actors in "Dzisiaj" of Telewizja Republika, however, does not appear in the description of events from abroad. In such situations, the valuation depends on the specific event. Similarly, in the program of Telewizja Trwam, here too there is no permanent division into entities valued negatively and positively, clear criticism can be directed both towards the government (for the liquidation of the fur industry in Poland or migration policy) and the opposition (liberal worldview, historical policy in cities). Similarly with global issues - most of the sentences where the governments of countries were an agent presented in a negative light, concerned the issue of abortion or the introduction of solutions beneficial to sexual minorities. A completely different approach, however, is visible in the other two programs, "Fakty" and "Wydarzenia", where sentences are used to show dynamism or show the sequence of events (especially in Polsat's program, in relation to criminal topics), rather than pointing to negative and positive subjects.

Further differences can be observed in the use of question in tickers. Although they appear in all the programs examined, the differences in the way of use are quite clear. While the author's goals, such as expressing doubts or pointing out a thesis in a question about a decision, are common, the predominance of presuppositional questions (especially those beginning with the pronoun who or to whom) is characteristic primarily of "Wiadomości" TVP and "Dzisiaj" by Telewizja Republika. In both of these programs, it was crucial for the authors to formulate a thesis indicating the existence of *someone* who acts against values that are important for the social (or state) interest. Again, both of the above-mentioned programs have in common the use of questions about the decision, where the recipient is presented with two options to choose from, one of which is clearly valued positively or negatively, and specific variants are selected manipulatively to serve the thesis imposed by the sender (e.g. *Democracy or the dictate of Brussels?*). It is also an opportunity for the sender to negatively evaluate words that actually have a neutral meaning (e.g. *Agricultural or political protest?*). Such an approach is not present at all in the other three televisions (in "Informacje dnia" such questions are not used at all, and in "Wydarzenia" and "Fakty" the viewer is presented with a real alternative).

The use of an additional grammatical form is already to all selected programs. Imperative statements explicitly encourage action, often as an educational campaign. Showing continuity in time is, in turn, a storytelling element, providing entertainment to this type of news that is intended to keep the viewer in front of the receiver not only on the day of the broadcast of the program, but also encouraging him to see the program to be shown on days. However, the information that something would not happen was simply an indication, for all broadcasters, that the expected event would not take place.

Interesting conclusions are provided by the analysis of quotes used in the tickers. In TVN and Polsat they mark their presence only marginally, while in the other three they are much more frequent. What is important here is the legible marking of the quote, which is not done in "Dzisiaj", additionally using the practice of quoting radical opinions collected in the process of a street survey in the ticker. All three television programs also share the goal behind the selection of people or institutions to whom the voice is given. On the one hand, this can serve to authenticate a particular thesis, but on the other hand, it can also be used to ridicule, by distorting the quote or taking words out of context.

However, it seems that evaluation has the most persuasive power, through a clear division into what is good and bad. As shown in the work, this can be done in several ways. The use of periphrases can be both glorifying (especially towards the dead or athletes) and stigmatizing (against criminals or entities representing values other than those that are close to the program line of a given broadcaster). Although the cases presenting a specific person or group in a good light are similar in all the programs studied, the use of such a procedure for the opposite purpose takes a different shape. In "Fakty" there are no such uses at all, while in "Wydarzenia" replacing neutral names of people with negative terms is reserved for criminals. Meanwhile, in the other three programs there is a practice of using pejorative terms for people with different views (in this case, these are politicians of opposition parties, politicians speaking on behalf of the European Union, etc.). In addition, these programs use non-neutral names of political entities, such as the total opposition, or socio-political phenomena, such as *wild reprivatisation*, *thieving reprivatisation*, *VAT crime*. Analogous terms aimed at any political force cannot be found in the news programs of Polsat and TVN.

A clear dividing line between the programs of TVP1, Telewizja Trwam and Telewizja Republika, and those of Polsat and TVN, is also visible in the analysis of tickers on information on ideological topics, such as abortion and women's rights, sexual minorities, the introduction of a Sunday trading ban, and finally the role of the Catholic Church in public life. It is clearly visible that "Informacje dnia" very consistently and radically expresses its

position supporting a complete ban on abortion not only in Poland but also in other countries, while "Dzisiaj" always presents people associated with the LGBTQ+ community in a negative way, going as far as even offensive terms. In "Wiadomości" both of these topics are present, the views expressed in the tickers are similar, but the language used is not so extreme, while the phrases contained in the headlines are primarily intended to express negative opinions, whether about the Polish opposition or about the EU institutions. However, in the case of the other two programs, despite the visibly different view on the issues described, there is no such strong evaluation, there are no pejorative or offensive terms.

Although evaluation is present in all the analyzed programs, where the positive and negative aspects of the discussed events or phenomena are often directly indicated, it is yet another example of a different approach to the issue by a given broadcaster. There are words that have a negative meaning depending on the context. A good example here is *political*, which as the antithesis of substantiveness has already penetrated into the tickers of all TV channels. However, what again connects the news services of TVP1, Telewizja Trwam and Telewizja Republika is the use of the words *German, Berlin, rainbow, Brussels, celebrity* in a negative sense. However, common to all broadcasters (although it is best used in Polsat) is the skilful appeal to human emotions, including playing on fear (for example: in the context of reported armed conflicts, natural disasters or, in some programmes, the migration crisis in Europe).

Some of the remaining rhetorical devices can already be attributed to a specific TV station, where they are used most often. The exception will be the metaphor present in each of the analyzed programs, especially referring to the domain of war, helpful in describing elections or ideological disputes. Other means are less common, and their use is clearly related to the intention of the author. For example, depreciating animalization occurs only in "Wiadomości" and "Dzisiaj", and metonymy is an important clue in "Informacje dnia". In the latter program, however, there is no irony, language games, stylizations or references to cultural texts, most of the content is given directly to the viewer. In Telewizja Republika, youth and colloquial language play an important role (which suggests that the target group is to be young viewers), and TVN's "Fakty" abound in ironic and ambiguous tickers, playing a game with the recipient in guessing the actual meaning, it is also very common in this station, the use of comic elements, not necessarily in the function of ridiculing (as is often the case in "Dzisiaj" or "Wiadomości"), but finding funny elements of the situation and pointing them out to the viewer.

Conclusions from qualitative analysis (especially those concerning lexical selection and valuation) were confirmed during quantitative research on corpora. In addition to confirming the hypothesis of nominalization similar to that in the case of press headlines, it was also shown, based on the study of key vocabulary, that there are stations that are similar in this respect (TVP1 and Telewizja Trwam; TVP1 and Telewizja Republika; TVN and Polsat) and such which have almost no similarities in this respect (TVN and Telewizja Etapm; TVN and Telewizja Republika; Polsat and Telewizja Trwam).

The analysis of the description of specific events (the killing of Paweł Adamowicz and the "yellow vests" strike) from the perspective of the tickers showed, firstly, the consistency of the public broadcaster in building the opposition (we - them in the domestic case; the French - Emmanuel Macron / European Union in the description of the events from France), secondly - the multitude of possibilities of formatting the message when there is a political context that can be used for the individual broadcaster's own use. In addition, both events examined provided evidence of the use of emotions and imagery in the tickers to exaggerate the drama of the facts and make the viewer curious about what will happen next.

Despite the fact that TVP's "Wiadomości" tickers do not constitute a collection that stands out from the rest (after all, there are similar headlines from Telewizja Trwam or Telewizja Republika), only they have become an inspiration for the recipients for many processing, as evidenced by the various creations in the form of memes, thematic pages on Facebook, Twitter accounts, microblogs, music tracks, generators and quizzes, and finally, a board game existing in the real world. This is certainly due to the greater popularity of "Wiadomości" than the other two services, but also to the fact that it is a program of a public broadcaster, subject to statutory obligations, listed in the Act of December 29, 1992 on radio and television (obliging TVP, among others, to show the diversity of events and phenomena, and to present diverse views and positions), from which the recipient holds the sender accountable in this way. Thus, the publications emphasize the schematic nature of the tickeres, imposing a division into good and bad, creating an opposition between us and them, and finally exaggerating national successes and reports of prosperity.

There is no doubt that on the basis of the tickers one can easily draw conclusions about the programming line of each of the stations examined in this work, as well as the worldview that underlies the theses formulated in the headlines. News concerning domestic politics and international relations seems to be particularly susceptible to authorial formatting, but it often seems that the content of the news is secondary to the generally accepted narrative on a given topic at a given station. The visible division into, on the one hand, three programs with a

common interpretation of events and two somewhat opposing ones is not symmetrical, however, and only one of these worldviews is presented to the recipient in a radical, consistent and additionally depreciating the opposite concepts.