

Analyzing The Use Of The Present Simple In Five Of The Best Newspapers By Circulation In The English Language

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ABSTRACT

The media is a crucial aspect of our lives and has a significant impact on our society because of the high level of communication throughout the world. A media's mission is to provide the latest news, sports, and style. Newspapers are the oldest type of news media and are often regarded as one of the most reliable information sources across the globe. Newspaper headlines are written in a block telegraphic style that frequently leaves the copula, resulting in grammatical uncertainty. The present tense is essential in the English tenses system. The historical present, also known as a dramatic present or narrative present in linguistics and rhetoric, uses the present tense while telling previous events. This study analyzed the use of the present simple in five of the best newspapers by circulation in the English language. A study of 75 headlines was conducted to determine the most frequently used tense in headlines, detect the reason behind that usage, and if that reason counts as a selling point. This study concluded that the historical present in news headlines is mostly utilized not only because it has the capability to make the news more fresh and vivid but also is a great marketing technique.

Keywords: Headlines, Media Manipulation, Tenses, historical present.

INTRODUCTION

The media is a crucial aspect of our lives and has a significant impact on our society; because of the high level of communication throughout the world, the significance of media is expanding daily. As a result, every one of us must become conscious of the media's influence; this enables us to evaluate all the data we get regularly. Media has had an essential part in the development of society. The media is sometimes said to be a "mirror of modern society"; nevertheless, it influences almost every aspect of our lives.

A media's mission is to provide the latest news, sports, and style. Its role must be one-way trade and selling of things, opinions, and beliefs. It provides geographic information on how people are separated. The media was ruled by justice and

fairness for the ordinary man and the elite. Newspapers are the oldest type of news media and are often regarded as one of the most reliable information sources across the globe.

The population began to spend more time than ever before on access to new media options, developing, consuming, and distributing diverse types and genres of media texts, and engagement in various media settings. Considering this, it is evident to many individuals and groups that media illiteracy may have severe political and social effects. Fake news and other forms of disinformation have existed in the past, but media manipulations have reached a global scale, which is why people of all ages require media literacy. Furthermore, various studies indicate that media education may improve knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to media analysis, critical reflection,

and disinformation (Levitskaya and Fedorov, 2020).

Time brings in new methods for transmitting information; the information's recipient is always a human. The person adds to and models his thoughts and beliefs as a parallel bearer of experience. On the other hand, language is critical for organizing experience, comprehending and classifying the universe, and transferring expertise. People produce a world model based on their subjective sense of reality and then transmit it to others via verbal means (Tsaturyan et al., 2019). "Nevertheless, within modern linguistics, it is chiefly within the last few years that fairly substantial attempts have been made to construct explicit generative grammars for particular languages and to explore their consequences" (Chomsky, 2014).

A digital newspaper is an online version of a newspaper that may be read as a standalone newspaper or a digital version of a print publication. Going online provides newspapers with several advantages, including providing breaking news, saving expenses, and maintaining tight connections with advertisers (Simge, 2019).

Newspaper headlines are written in a block telegraphic style that frequently leaves the copula, resulting in grammatical uncertainty. Amphiboly or amphibology are terms for syntactic ambiguity. Because of the ambiguous sentence form, a statement can be understood in several ways (Hamdan and Qais 2016).

The headline is a text that describes the article's content underneath it. A special kind of text, a text which cannot have an autonomous status. It's a text link to another text and serves as a headline for that other content. As a text, the headline should have a nominal structure that may be reduced to a single word, phrase, or combination of phrases. The headline might have the structure of a sentence on rare occasions. The headline is a text despite its form since "textual" features may be recognized. The location of the headline formally defines its purpose. It is put in front of the text ('headline'), at the beginning, or at a visually recognizable position where priority may be seen (for example, by a frame, etc.) (Iarovici and Amel, 1989).

In the evolution of the English language, the media creates a connection between human and non-human elements (Asemota, 2015). Fear in the news media is examined from various theoretical viewpoints, including symbolic interactionism, structuralism, and cultural studies. According to symbolic interaction, the effect of every communication is its contribution to the actor's definition of the circumstance. For audiences with no direct, personal involvement with the problem, mass-mediated experiences, events, and concerns are especially important. Many observers have pondered how generally healthy and safe people can believe themselves vulnerable (Altheide and Michalowski, 1999).

The historic present

The present tense is essential in the English tenses system (it may indicate future and past events in addition to current occurrences). The present tense is atemporal in this sense. Even though future present-tense references are accompanied by a time adverbial (the futurity is therefore stated lexically), this is not always the case when the future reference is evident from the context (Duskova, 1988).

The historical present, also known as a dramatic present or narrative present in linguistics and rhetoric, uses the present tense while telling previous events. When writing about history, it is extensively employed in Latin (where its Latin name, *praesens historicum*, sometimes refers to it) and various modern European languages. It is mostly used in historical chronicles in English (listing a series of events). In literature, for "breaking news" (as in headlines) and in ordinary discourse, it is also employed (Huddleston and Pullum, 2005).

"The historical or historic present is the name given to the use of the present tense in a narrative when the verb would be expected to have been in the past tense or perfective aspect" (Levinsohn, 2000).

News as discourse

Since the 1960s, the humanities and social sciences have formed a new cross-discipline called discourse studies. Such evolution occurred roughly simultaneously and close to the emergence of numerous other interdisciplinary fields in the humanities, such as semiotics,

sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and psycholinguistics. Even though like semiotics, "discourse analysis" was founded on principles from multiple strands of structural and functional linguistics, new advances influenced its latest advancements in the social sciences. As a result, anthropology began to pay attention to complex components like "communicative events," a field of study known as "the ethnography of speaking" (Wahl and Hanitzsch, 2009). In addition, according to journalists, journalism has developed to imply much more than its modern perspective of providing people with what they need to know (Deuze, 2004).

One of the essential values of journalism is accuracy. Yet, it is becoming increasingly difficult to monitor because of the variety of news sources. Some online news editors employ attention-getting titles to attract viewers to click. Such headlines are confusing or deceptive, affecting the reading experience (Wei and Wan, 2017). News values are used not just to answer concerns about what to cover or what constitutes news during the conception stage but also to address other pertinent journalistic questions concerning the narrative and its construction:

- What to do about it.
- What should I highlight?
- When to speak with whom, and when to pursue or wait. (Cotter, 2010)

"News values can be seen as discursively constructed, and newsworthiness becomes a quality of texts. News values are thus defined as the 'newsworthy' aspects of actors, happenings, and issues existing in and constructed through discourse." (Caple & Bednarek, 2013).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study analyzed the use of the present simple in five of the best newspapers by circulation in the English language. A study of 75 headlines was conducted to determine the most frequently used tense in headlines, detect the reason behind that usage, and if that reason counts as a selling point.

The newspapers were:

1. The Guardian.
2. The Wall Street Journal.
3. The New York Times.
4. The Washington Post.
5. The Times.

The sample contains articles that were available online during the period between 23/1/2021 to 25/9/2021. Most of the headlines were gathered from the articles on the homepage, a large number of them included breaking news, and a few were opinions.

These newspapers were chosen because they were among the best-selling newspapers globally in English online. Although newspaper content has shifted from physical to digital distribution, as the world's top newspapers have modified how they target their audiences, they're adjusting their strategies in response to industry changes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Because the current study is primarily concerned with tenses, the non-finite verbs and subordinate clauses were excluded from the study; as shown in table one, only 68 headlines were left to analyze.

The newspaper	finite Verbs	non-finite Verbs
The Guardian	14	1
The Wall Street Journal	13	2
The New York Times	15	0
The Washington Post	13	2
The Times	13	2

Table 1; The finite Verbs and non-finite Verbs

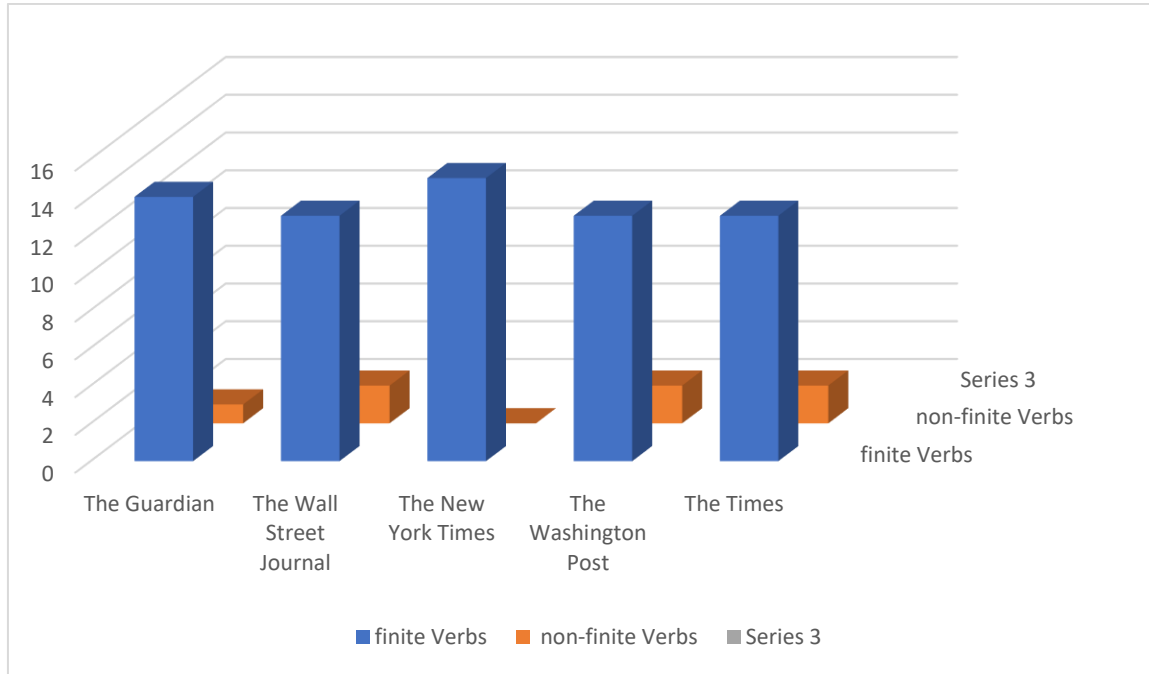


Fig. 1 The finite Verbs and non-finite Verbs

1- The Guardian

The 14 headlines left to analyze revealed that the verbs in only 2 were in the past tense, and the

verbs in the 12 that were left were in the present tense. Eleven headlines were in the historical present, and only one was in the present, which referred to the future.

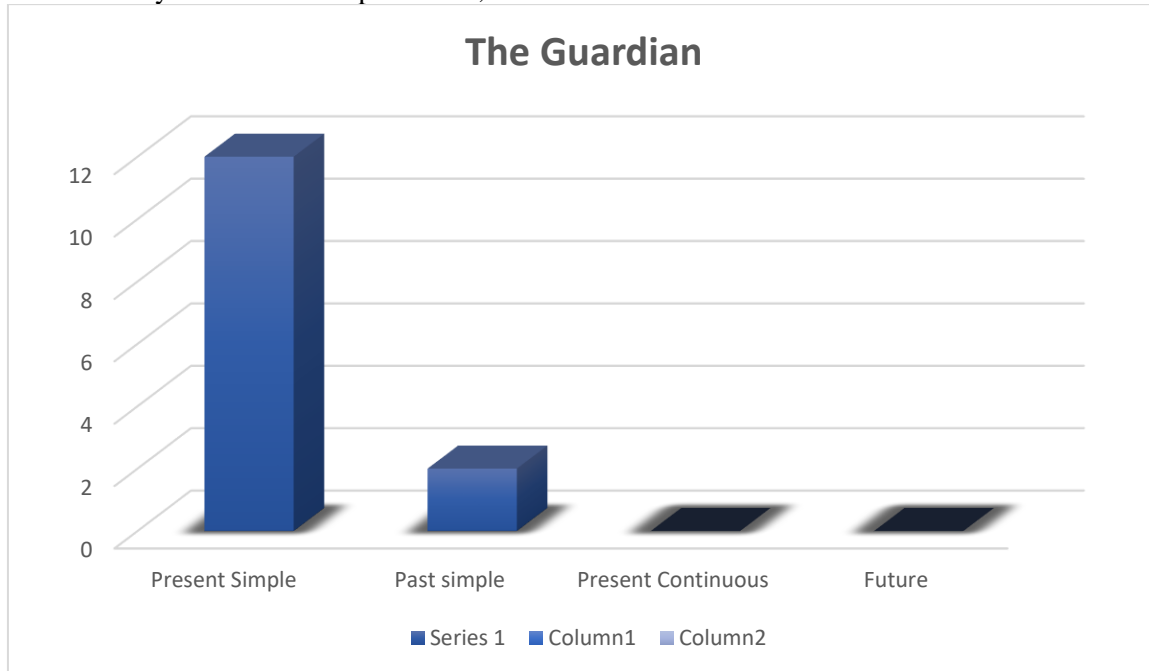


Fig. 1 The use of single finite verbal forms according to the tense used in The Guardian headlines.

2- The Wall Street Journal

The 13 headlines left to analyze revealed that the verbs in only 2 were in the past tense, 11 were in the present tense, and 11 headlines were in the present simple, which refers to past events.

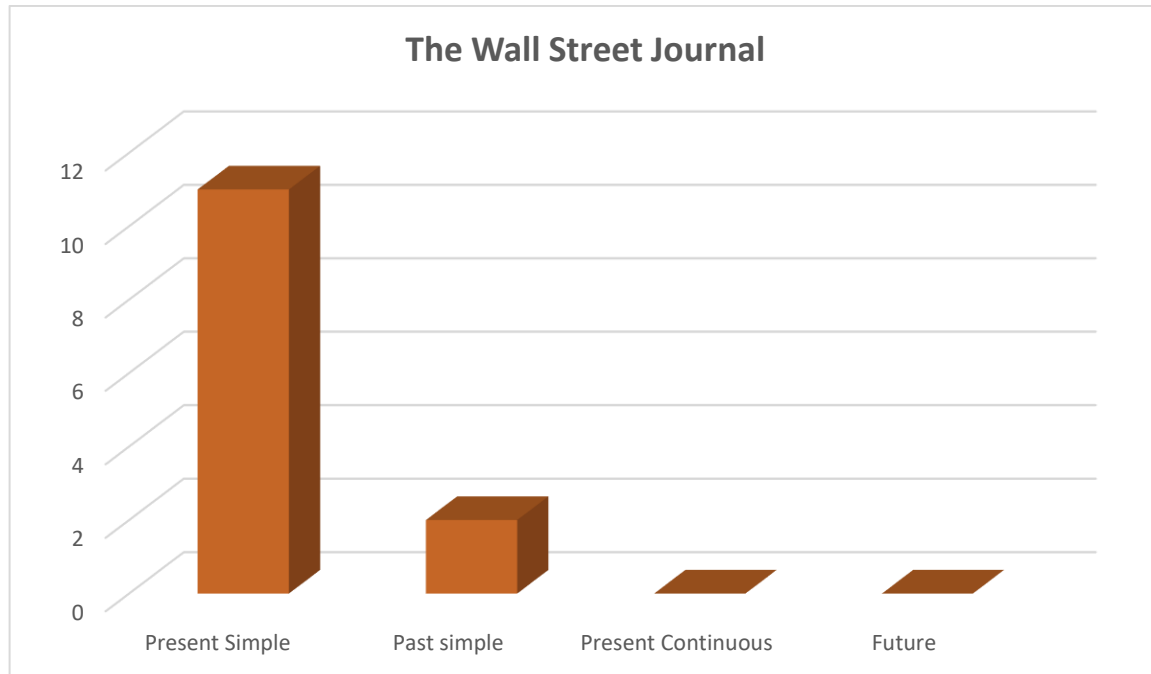


Fig. 2. The use of single finite verbal forms according to the tense used in The Wall Street Headlines.

Among the 15 headlines, 9 were in the historical present; only 3 were in the past tense, 2 in the present continuous, and one in the future.

3- The New York Times

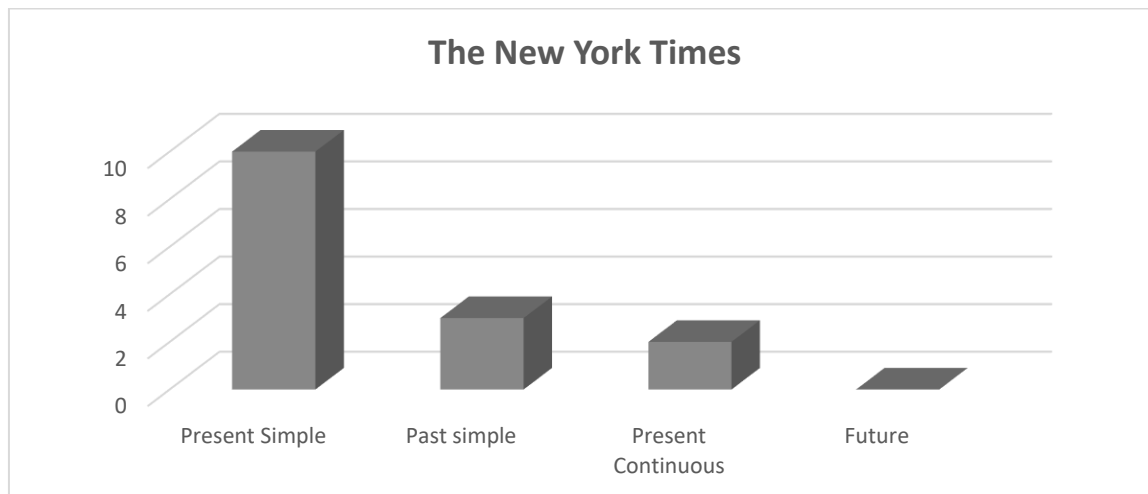


Fig. 4. The use of single finite verbal forms according to the tense used in The New York Times headlines

Among the 13 headlines, 9 were in the historical present; only 3 were in the past tense, 1 was in the present continuous.

4- The Washington Post

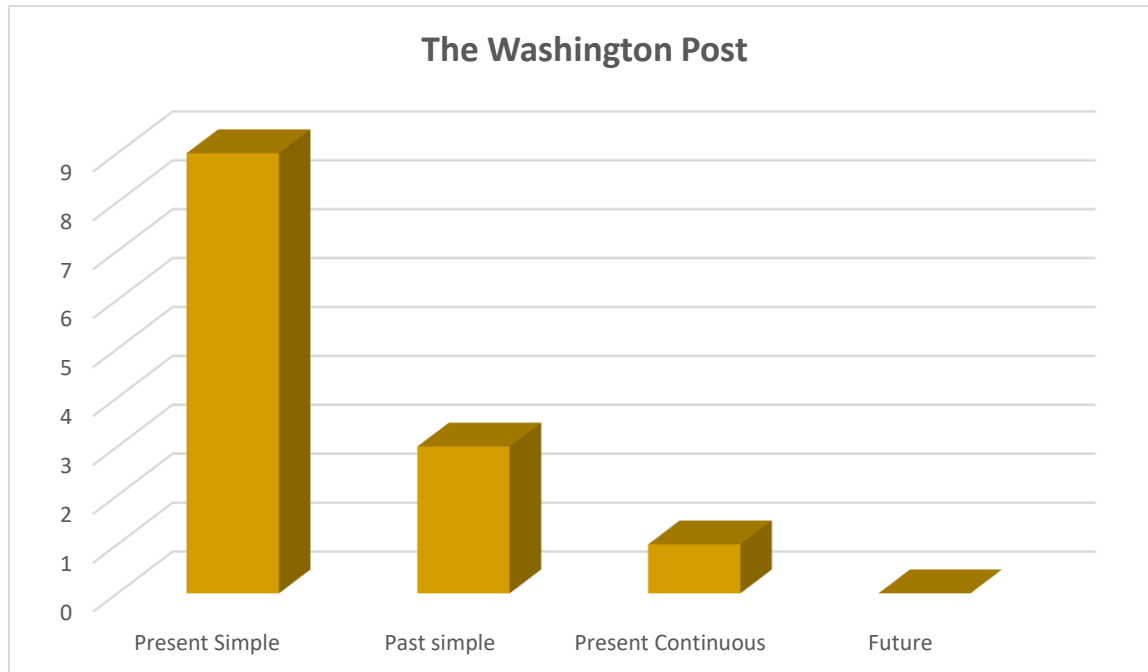


Fig. 4. The use of single finite verbal forms according to the tense used in The Washington Post headlines.

The 13 headlines left to analyze revealed that the verbs in only 1 were in the past tense, and the verbs in the 12 that were left were in the present tense; 11 were in the historical present.

5- The Times

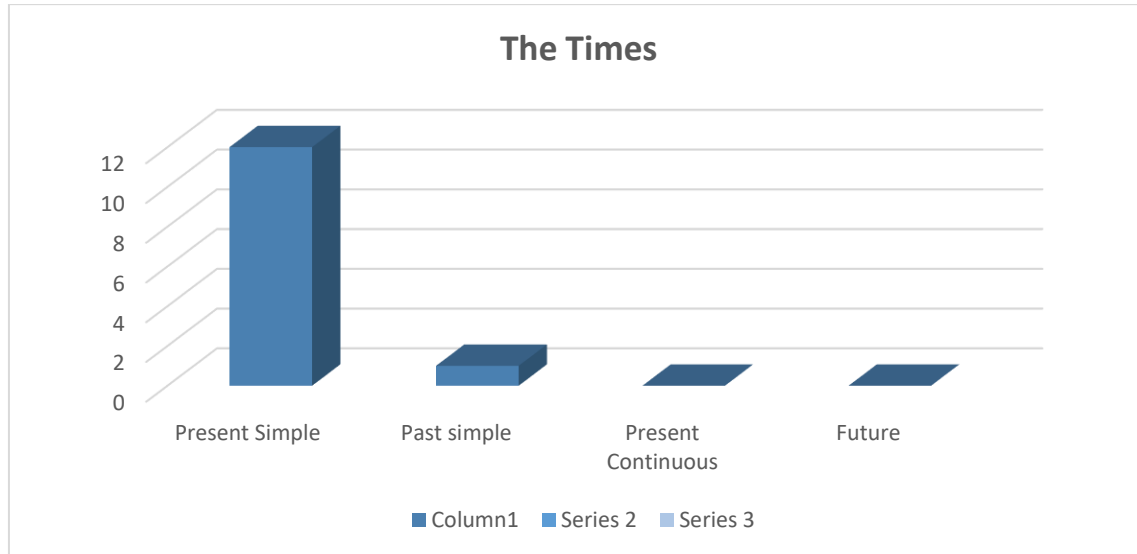


Fig. 5. The use of single finite verbal forms according to the tense used in The Washington Post headlines

tense (mainly the historical present) is the most often used tense in newspaper headlines, followed by the past simple, other tenses are rarely used.

After analyzing the 75 headlines from The Guardian, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Times it was apparent that the present simple

These newspapers are the most reputable and the Top 10 U.K. and U.S.A. Daily Newspapers by Circulation according to Infoplease (one of the most online trusted sources of information). By

taking a closer look at the findings, we can conclude that the more circulated the newspaper, the more frequently it uses the present simple. According to Hamdan and Qais (2016), the present simple tense, whether conventional or historical, is the most commonly employed tense in newspapers since it allows Journalists to make the story more fresh and vivid, thereby attracting readers' interest, followed by the past tense and future tense in that order, their study also found that the historical present, which is used to relate to previous events in a fresh way, is more commonly employed than the conventional present tense.

This study added that the historical present in news headlines is mainly utilized not only because it has the capability to make the news more fresh and vivid but also is a great marketing technique.

Chovanec pointed out that the atemporality of the present simple and its function as an "internal evaluation device" in storytelling are described concerning its employment in headlines. However, its ability to relate to past actions, often overlooked in hard news headlines, is seen as primarily motivated by the interpersonal function (Chovanec, 2003).

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the historical present in news headlines is mainly utilized not only because it has the capability to make the news more fresh and vivid but is also a great marketing technique.

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