

English Language Article Comparison

In this piece of work I will be comparing two articles from newspapers. Both the articles are about the same story and were printed on the same day (Tuesday October 13th 1998), however they are from two different newspapers. One of them is from The Sun and the other from The Telegraph, the main difference between these two papers is that The Sun is a tabloid and The Telegraph is a broadsheet. Throughout this piece of work I will try to examine the difference in their attitudes towards writing news due to this variation in category of newspaper. The article concerns dogs that were at a police dog training unit, the instructor allegedly forced a handler to kick and hang the dogs, one of the dogs involved died.

The first and most distinctive thing you realise about these two stories is the difference in headlines. Firstly in The Telegraph the height of the letters involved is only approximately 1cm where as in The Sun it is 2.6cm. This clearly shows that The Sun wants to make a larger impact and draw your attention to that particular story. Other points about the headlines that back this up are the style of writing. In The Telegraph the headline has been written in serif, this means that the editor has decided to use a font which includes small decorative lines at the ends of letters, however The Sun's headline is in sans serif and so doesn't have these lines. This makes the letters much more sharp, and 'right-angled' this gives a hard feel to the words and helps attract readers. Another way the editor has used the headline to attract the reader in The Sun is by using block capitals, this instantly makes the letters bigger, stand out and coupled with the words being in bold black and sans serif gives a real shock effect. A similarity between these two headlines though is that they both use quotes, this makes it sound and feel more real to a reader because it says exactly what actual people said and after having read the subheadline, probably what they said in court. However, I personally feel that the main difference is the actual words that have been used. The Sun's headline is much more emotive, it uses words such as 'cruel', 'kick' and death. These words will instantly capture people and conjure up images that will stir their imagination and make them want to read on. Not only this but the headline also reads 'kick his own dog to death', this makes it seem even worse because it wasn't a dog belonging to the police but his own family pet. It makes the whole thing seem even more cruel and will once again make people more interested in the story, especially for people who have pet dogs. However, The Telegraph is much more informative and factual, it makes a statement about what happened without going into detail about the emotions of it. It says; 'Police 'told to kick and punch dogs'', although it does use words such as 'kick' and 'punch' it uses them in a way to inform what the police had been told to do and doesn't go into detail about what the trainer was like. I also feel an interesting thing to also look at is the use of 'made' and 'told' in these two headlines. When The Sun says '...made cop kick his own god to death' it uses 'made' to incriminate the trainers, it makes it sound like the policemen didn't have a choice and that the whole incident was the trainers fault. Whereas The Telegraph uses 'told', this is much more informative and is simply saying what happened, there is no emotional influence in the way The Telegraph have written this headline.

The subheadlines are also quite interesting, firstly their placing, The Telegraph has decided to place the subheadline before the main headline and in The Sun it has been placed after the headline. This may have been done for a number of reasons. In The Telegraph the subheadline reads; 'German Shepard died after punishment, court told' this subheadline has probably been used to give the reader a bit more information about the story before they read on like the type of dog involved and the fact that the dog died. In The Sun they have decided to put the information that the dog died in their headline and the fact it was a German Shepard isn't mentioned in The Sun at all. On to The Sun's subheadline and it simply reads 'Jury told of punishment' this has been put after the headline to inform the reader of where the quote of the headline came from. As well as this in The Sun not only does it have a subheadline after the headline, it also has other subheadlines throughout the story to introduce new parts of the article and to split it into three parts; the extra subheadlines are 'Warned' and 'Shaking'. These words are actually used in the section of the article they introduce so that the reader will want to continue. You notice these words and they stand out because they are very expressive and they give you information about what is going to happen in the article even if you don't read on. I also feel that The Sun has used these particular words to good use, if you didn't have time to read the whole article and only read the headline and these subheadlines you would leave with a very strong feeling of hatred towards the trainers. Not only with words like 'made' which I have already explained, but when it is followed by a subheadline of 'warned' it makes you feel as though the police were threatened by the trainers and were warned by them to do nothing wrong. I personally feel that The Telegraph has a more hard-hitting headline for a particular reason. The Sun has made it's main headline strike out of the page and really make you read on, this means they have put a simple subheadline so as not to overshadow the headline. Whereas The Telegraph has done it the other way around, their headline is not so hard-hitting so the editor has decided to include an emotive subheadline to aid the reader in being interested in the story and to read on.

After having seen the headlines and been attracted to the story you begin to read the main text. Straight away in the hook paragraph you can see differences in the papers' attitudes. Firstly, and most obviously the fact that in The Sun the first paragraph has been written in bold, and simply written normally in The Telegraph. Once again it seems that The Sun has been much more emotive in its approach. Words such as 'forced' and 'kicked it' are used, not only this but the word 'DIED' is written in block capitals, this is to emphasise the word and everything it means and the horror of what happened to the dogs. Words used in The Telegraph are very interesting. The first line explains that the dogs were 'chastised', it is interesting they should use this word because although it is hard hitting it probably doesn't have the same effect on you as 'kicking' (which is in The Sun). However The Telegraph does say that dogs were 'hung helplessly from a wall by their leads' this is then followed by 'a court was told yesterday' it is as though The Telegraph wants to remain on the fence by simply stating what was said but at the same time drumming up emotion in the reader and making them read on, all in all

The Sun is more opinionated and The Telegraph is trying as best it can to stay factual. A similarity between the two stories is the use of quotation. Both articles have many quotes from the police officers and trainers in question and almost all of the quotes were said in court. This could well be because on the day these two articles were published the case was still in court and they had little else to go on than this. Also the writer of the article in The Sun has done something slightly unusual in that he has decided to put some paragraphs into italics. This is almost certainly to draw the readers attention to that part of the story and make them read and think about it a different way. There are three paragraphs throughout the article that are in italics and out of these two of them focus on the cruelty to the animals, they go into detail about the way in which this happened and how the dogs reacted to it. The third paragraph describes how two of the handlers left in protest to what was going on before the dog died. Both these points are quite significant to the overall story and you can see why the writer may well have wanted the reader to be more aware of these facts than perhaps other points. Another point that I have found very interesting is sentence type used in both articles. It is normal for newspapers to use a lot of declarative sentences, these help the reporter to get across to the reader all the important information quickly and easily. An example from The Sun would be; 'PC James English told the court his dog Tazz had been hanged for growling' and The Telegraph; 'Trainers at the police dog unit, based at Sandon, Chelmsford, Essex'. However, differences occur between the newspapers when you look at the use of complex sentences, these are more rarely used in papers as they are longer and are not so dramatic. However, as you would expect it is The Telegraph that has used a couple but The Sun has used a lot fewer. As I have already described, The Telegraph is a more up-market paper and is aimed towards a sector of society who appreciate this sort of writing whereas The Sun is not. In fact a complex sentence has been used in The Telegraph to say the same as my last quotation of a declarative sentence from The Sun; "PC James English said his dog, Tazz was twice subjected to the hanging method after he had growled during training'.

Both the articles have, to some extent used pictures to aid the article's representation of what happened. The way in which pictures have been used however, is quite different. Firstly, in The Telegraph there is only one picture, it simply shows two of the accused dog trainers as though they are walking into court. You get this impression because it is an unposed shot and has been taken from a wide angle, plus neither trainer is looking at the camera nor willing to and so the only reason this was used was because it is probably the only available photo of them. On the other hand The Sun has used many pictures in many ways. The editor has decided to put four small photographs next to each other, each with different man who has been accused, not only this but they have put a banner across the side of each of them which reads; 'ACCUSED'. This has certainly been used as an emotive step so that the reader feels harsh thoughts towards these people because the banner instantly portrays them as callous and bad, even though it still hasn't gone through court, all four of the pictures are close up and unposed. In fact in the close up pictures you can barely see anything else other than the faces of these men, this stirs emotion because their whole face is made very big in

proportion to the story and the close up highlights all the parts of their face, which can be very hardening. As well as this, there are two other pictures, one simply of an Alsatian, with its tongue, this photo has been specifically selected to make you feel kindly towards the dogs and make the reader feel sorry for what happened to them. Emotion is put upon the photo of the dog because the dog looks so defenceless and with its tongue sticking out makes you feel terrible about the fact it was killed. Next to this is a photo that probably stirs up the most emotion, it depicts PC Needham with his dog, this is his own dog and the one he was forced to kill. The photo was obviously taken before the dog-training course began and you can easily see that the policeman is very happy with the dog. This goes back to what I said earlier about it being his own dog that he had to kill and how upsetting that must have been for him and potentially his family if it was a family pet.

In conclusion I strongly believe that throughout The Sun's depiction of the event the editor has selected a lot of different elements to give a very emotive and sensational appearance to what happened. You can clearly see the moment you look at the headline whose side the paper is on and it is obviously that of the handlers and the dogs, in the headline it describes the trainers as 'cruel'. On the other hand The Telegraph has produced a much more informative view on what happened. Although most of the information given is the same it is told in a different way and it is harder to see if this paper is on any particular side. Use of straight forwards facts and not mixing any emotion or opinion in with it aids this.

Once again I have been studying a story in a newspaper. Like last time the article in question is in two different papers, one a tabloid – The Express, and one a broadsheet – The Independent, they were also both published on the same day and the same day as the 'Police Dog' article – October 13th 1998. This time however, the story concerns Dr. Harold Shipman and both stories are reporting on the exhumation of a fifth body to study whether or not this GP killed her.

Straight away an interesting point you notice about the difference of these two papers when compared to the other two is both the headlines are written in serif. This straight away says something about the way that The Express deals with news stories and The Sun, even though they are both tabloids. In fact the similarities between these articles (even though one is in a tabloid and one in a broadsheet) goes on. The difference in size of the headlines is very little and neither of the headlines has been made anymore bold than they would be originally. This all points to The Express being a lot closer to being a broadsheet than other tabloids such as The Sun. However the distinctive features of a tabloid begin to come through as you start to actually read them. The headline of The Express is much more emotive, words such as 'grim search' and 'widow's body' (in the sub-headline) point to this, These words are emotive because they stir feeling and make you really consider how bad the search for bodies of Harold Shipman is. The headline as a whole; 'The grim search goes on' intrigues you into what they might be talking about, in fact the headline doesn't give any clues at all away to what the actual story is about and is simply there to make you find out and then read on. On the other

hand the headline in The Independent is much more of a statement, it is factual and doing nothing more than relying the information on to the reader 'GP case: another body to be exhumed'. An interesting point to notice is that in The Independent they have used a colon in the headline. This has been used for two reasons, to shorten the length of the headline and to make it more dramatic. Without a colon the headline would probably have to read something like 'In the GP case another body will be exhumed'. This long headline takes away the shock factor and interest in the story.

Once the headline has been read you move onto the sub-headline, in this instance The Independent doesn't have one whereas The Express has decided to include one. This may be because the headline in The Express doesn't give that much information about what the story is specifically about whereas the sub-headline; 'Police exhume widow's body' is specific to this article. The sub-headline is also very emotive, not due to the fact it talks about exhumation, which is pretty shocking anyway, but that when the body died it was a widow and although the body may have been dead a long time it still makes you think about elderly people dying and being murdered which definitely makes you want to read on. Also I feel the words 'elderly women' make you think of defenceless 'lovely' women who rarely do anything wrong. Whereas 'murderer' makes you think of a vicious man who has done everything wrong – the opposite to the elderly women.

After the headline you move on to the main body of the text, and firstly the hook paragraph. It is interesting that both the hook paragraphs are very similar; not only in the information they give you but also in the way they have been worded. They both inform the reader that the police are going to exhume a fifth body that day in search of evidence against the GP Dr. Harold Shipman as well as this both editors have decided to make the first word of the article block capitals. The only noticeable difference between them is that in The Express the hook paragraph is in a slightly bigger font than the rest of the article, this is, like many other things done by the tabloids, done to get you to read and make you interested in the story so that you continue to read.

After that you arrive at the actual article itself and although you have to study for differences a bit harder this time there are still things you can pick out. As you read through them you begin to notice a difference in the way they have written about the, then suspected, victims of Dr. Shipman. The Independent gives the information you might expect, such as their names, date of death but also goes into detail about how they were meant to have died; 'she died of coronary thrombosis, ischaemic heart disease and chronic obstructive airway disease'. This detail about cause of death has been used in The Independent perhaps to show respect for their readers. A certain group of society read broadsheet rather than tabloids and include this complicated information could be a way of signalling this. However, The Express gives less detail and sometimes remarks on details that the reporter for The Independent may have thought of as quite trivial, such as their place of birth and their occupation while alive. Other than that the articles are very similar. They both describe the case in full and also how the GP forged a will, the other people involved in the case and Shipman's history as a doctor. The Independent's

article is slightly longer mainly due to the greater detail the writer has used as I have already discussed.

The use of pictures is also a point to reference. The Independent has decided to not use any pictures at all whereas The Express has used two. One of these is a close up and a posed shot of Dr. Harold Shipman. This particular picture has once again been used to stir emotion. The picture of Harold Shipman is very close up; in fact the frame of the photo is just around his face and you see very little else. This gives across the image that The Independent are trying to give, it almost sends a shiver down your spine when you see this photo and you are made to believe he is a murderer in the article, the technique used here is very similar to the one used in The Sun when talking about the 'Police Dog' article. Although at time of going to print he had not been convicted so it is possible he was still innocent, The Express doesn't portray this though and the picture is just another way in which The Express has tried to put the nail in the coffin of Harold Shipman. As well as this there is a wide shot of a grave that has been dug up, this is uncomfortable to look at for obvious reasons and especially in the British culture where anything to do with death is rejected in society much more than in other parts of the world. It is very interesting to notice the caption by the pictures, like the headline in The Independent it uses a colon to shorten it. 'NEW DIG: The mound of earth...' this has been done to tell the reader what the picture is of as a straight forward statement rather than a sentence, then they can read on to find more information about it. Once again it is interesting that The Sun used this technique with a colon, this is one of the few similarities between the broadsheets and tabloids that I have been studying.

In conclusion I feel that the difference between these two papers is much more subtle than that of The Telegraph and The Sun. This could well be because The Express is a much less of a tabloid than The Sun, The Sun is a member of a group of newspapers which include The Mirror and News of the World that are socialist and are targeted at certain groups of society, they nearly always take a view on something and portray their stories in this way. They also often deal a lot in 'gossip' and stories that may not have much official backing, this sells them a lot of papers but can often get them into trouble. However, papers such as The Express and The Daily Mail are also tabloids but take a much less extremist view, they are a tabloid in the sense that they will tamper in the field of so called gossip but not to the extent of The Sun, The Mirror etc. This is why it is much more difficult to spot differences between The Independent and The Express. Broadsheets on the other hand are often simply an informative paper, the reporters get information about a case and put in a story to convey it to the reader, they do not try to involve emotion and/or opinions in the way that tabloids might and their stories can be nearly always guaranteed to be totally fact or at least based on solid evidence.