

S.S. Zhabayeva A. Baitursynov Kostanay Regional University, Kazakhstan, Kostanay
e-mail: zhabayeva_ss@mail.ru**CROSS-CULTURAL FEATURES OF THE BRITISH NEWSPAPER
DISCOURSE: LINGUACULTURAL ANALYSIS**

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of modern British newspaper discourse, focusing on cultural specificities inherent in the language used by The Times and The Guardian. The issues of newspaper discourse are in the focus of modern linguistics from the point of better understanding the specifics of the British journalistic style. A newspaper discourse is a unique type of communication since it is characterized by dynamic development and language means which reflect sociocultural values. The aim of the article is to analyze language means and communication strategies which shape cultural identity. The study analyzes the language traits characterizing British culture and mentality through a thorough analysis of the selected newspaper articles. Discursive analysis of the selected material allowed revealing the cultural markers based on linguistic features. The persistent use of humor and sarcasm, the abundance of allusions to British culture, the degree of indirectness and politeness, and the hints of class consciousness and values are only a few of the key results. This research underscores the intricate relationship between language and culture in print media and sets the stage for future investigations into other media forms and longitudinal analysis of cultural nuances in modern British newspaper discourse.

Key words: discourse, culture, cultural markers, cultural identity, values.

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e-mail: zhabayeva_ss@mail.ru**Британдық газет дискурсындағы кросс-мәдени ерекшеліктер:
лингвомәдени талдау**

Бұл мақалада The Times және The Guardian газеттерінде қолданылатын тілдің мәдени ерекшеліктеріне назар аудара отырып, қазіргі британдық газет дискурсына жан-жақты талдау жасалған. Британдық публицистикалық стильдің ерекшеліктерін жақсы түсіну тұрғысынан публицистикалық дискурс мәселелері қазіргі лингвистиканың назарында. Газет дискурсы коммуникацияның ерекше түрі болып табылады, өйткені ол тілдің динамикалық дамуымен сипатталады және әлеуметтік-мәдени құндылықтарды көрсетеді. Мақаланың мақсаты мәдени сәйкестікті анықтайтын тілдік құралдар мен коммуникативтік стратегияларды талдау. Зерттеу тандалған газет мақалаларың мұқият талдау арқылы британдық мәдениет пен менталитет сипаттайтын тілдік белгілерді талдайды. Тандалған материалды дискурстық талдау тілдік ерекшеліктер негізінде мәдени маркерлерді анықтауға мүмкіндік берді. Әзіл мен сарказмды жиі қолдану, британдық мәдениетке тұспалдардың көптігі, ашықтық пен сыпайылық дәрежесі, таптық сана мен құндылықтардың тұспалдары негізгі нәтижелердің кейбірі ғана. Бұл зерттеу баспа басылымдарындағы тіл мен мәдениет арасындағы күрделі қарым-қатынасты көрсетеді және басқа дискурсивті формалар бойынша болашақ зерттеулерге және қазіргі британдық газет дискурсындағы мәдени нюанстарды жан-жақты талдауға негіз қалайды.

Түйін сөздер: дискурс, мәдениет, мәдени маркерлер, мәдени сәйкестілік, құндылықтар.

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Костанайский региональный университет им. А. Байтұрсынова, Казахстан, г. Костанай
e-mail: zhabayeva_ss@mail.ru**Кросс-культурные особенности Британского
газетного дискурса: лингвокультурный анализ**

В этой статье представлен всесторонний анализ современного британского газетного дискурса с акцентом на культурные особенности, присущие языку, используемому в The Times и The Guardian. Проблемы журналистского дискурса находятся в центре внимания современной лингвистики с точки зрения лучшего понимания специфики британского публицистического стиля.

Газетный дискурс является уникальным видом коммуникации так как характеризуется динамическим развитием языка и отражает социокультурные ценности. Цель статьи – анализ языковых средств и коммуникативных стратегий, которые выявляют культурную идентичность. В исследовании анализируются языковые черты, характеризующие британскую культуру и ментальность, посредством тщательного анализа отобранных газетных статей. Дискурсивный анализ отобранного материала позволил выявить культурные маркеры на основе языковых особенностей. Частое использование юмора и сарказма, обилие аллюзий на британскую культуру, степень открытости и вежливости, намеки на классовое сознание и ценности — лишь некоторые из ключевых результатов. Это исследование подчеркивает сложную взаимосвязь между языком и культурой в печатных СМИ и закладывает основу для будущих исследований других дискурсивных форм и всестороннего анализа культурных нюансов в современном британском газетном дискурсе.

Ключевые слова: дискурс, культура, культурные маркеры, культурная идентичность, ценности.

Introduction

Understanding the cross-cultural specifics of a nation's newspaper discourse is an essential exercise in sociolinguistics, as it provides a critical pathway to comprehend the inherent values, historical evolution, and social norms of a society. Newspapers are crucial in influencing public opinion and propagating cultural specifics because of their extensive reach and power. This article explores a topic that has not yet been fully investigated: contemporary British newspaper discourse and its ingrained cultural quirks. This study tries to give a detailed view of the cultural components mirrored in the language usage by analyzing stylistic and grammatical features in contemporary British newspaper discourse. The focus will be on words, phrases, and concepts that distinctly echo British culture and mentality, as represented in prominent newspapers such as *The Times* and *The Guardian*. These newspapers, renowned for their broad readership and influential reportage, provide a fertile ground for this study. The uniqueness of British newspaper discourse is underpinned by its capability to reflect societal dynamics, serving as a gauge of societal, political, and cultural evolution across time. The employed language and discourse expressive means provide a special synthesis of components that reflect the culture and identity of Britain. However, the disparity is obvious. There aren't many thorough studies looking at the cultural consequences of British newspaper discourse despite the rich cultural tapestry it presents. By exploring the cultural specificities buried in British newspaper discourse a subject ripe with sociocultural and linguistic insights—this research seeks to address this gap. With the primary goal of identifying how the use of words, phrases, and concepts in British newspaper discourse reflects cultural traits, this

research utilizes a robust methodology. Employing textual analysis, comparative methods, and socio-cultural approaches, this study embarks on an exploration of British newspaper discourse, striving to illuminate the often-overlooked cultural nuances captured in everyday news language.

Material and methods

This study focuses on analyzing the discourse of stories from *The Times* and *The Guardian*, two of Britain's most significant publications. The selection of these publications was made for their vast circulation, diversity of ideologies, and capacity to cover a wide range of socio-cultural elements. The timeframe under consideration spans from 2005 to 2023 and includes a wide range of publications that capture the changing social dynamics and cultural discourse over this time.

The study scrutinizes British newspaper articles chosen randomly, ensuring a comprehensive representation across various categories, including politics, sports, lifestyle, arts, and science. This breadth of subjects allows us to provide a balanced and in-depth analysis, limiting potential bias and facilitating a comprehensive portrayal of British culture and mentality as mirrored in newspaper discourse. Preliminary analysis, exploration, and interpretation are all steps in a thorough three-step analytical process that is applied to the selected articles. The first analysis is a quick scan that reveals interesting themes, linguistic components, and patterns for further investigation. Exploration involves deeper textual analysis, considering the identified themes and patterns within the broader socio-cultural context. The final stage, interpretation, synthesizes the findings, offering an informed understanding of the cultural specificities embedded within the discourse.

The research is based on the following questions:

1. What are the linguistic characteristics of modern British newspaper discourse?
2. How do the words, phrases, and concepts used reflect British culture and mentality?

The study begins with the central hypothesis that modern British newspaper discourse exhibits unique linguistic characteristics that mirror the country's cultural nuances. From vocabulary choices and phraseology to stylistic and structural features, we think that underlying cultural qualities are reflected in the language used in British newspaper discourse. The article structure, headlines, and thematic focus are taken into consideration in addition to the content analysis because these components might also indicate cultural differences.

A number of approaches are used, such as discourse analysis and comparison analysis, to enable this in-depth examination. Discourse analysis can help us comprehend how newspaper speech both reflects and generates social reality by revealing how language is used in social contexts. On the other hand, comparative analysis allows us to spot patterns, similarities, and contrasts between several articles, facilitating a more detailed comprehension of the linguistic traits of contemporary British newspaper discourse.

For a more comprehensive exploration, the study relies on elements of socio-cultural linguistics, a field that examines the intricate relationships between language and society. This method aids in our comprehension of the cultural effects of newspaper language usage. These approaches and resources work together to provide us a solid foundation for delving deeply into the cultural facets of contemporary British newspaper discourse, offering new insights into the language-culture nexus as represented in British newspapers.

Literature review

Newspaper discourse has been an area of focus for several researchers over the years. Starting with Bell's seminal work, "Language and New Media," is a cornerstone in the field of media linguistics, presenting a critical understanding of the ideological dimensions of news language (Bell, 1995). Bell's exploration focuses primarily on how language serves as a tool for ideological manipulation, subtly molding public perception and understanding. However, one notices a lacuna in his study as it overlooks the cultural specificities that get reflected in the discourse (Gupta, 1995). While analyzing the

ideological dimensions, it misses the vital cultural contexts, leaving room for further research into how media language mirrors societal norms and cultural contexts (Hodkinson, 2016). Richardson threads a similar line of thought in his work, he puts forth an extensive methodological framework for investigating the language used in newspapers (Richardson, 2017). Richardson excellently underscores the proactive role newspapers play in shaping public realities, going beyond the conventional perception of newspapers as neutral information distributors. However, akin to Bell's work, Richardson's study, while commendable in dissecting ideological implications, does not dig deep into the cross-cultural aspects of newspaper discourse. A study by Boykoff echoes this sentiment, highlighting the need to analyze how newspapers help shape cultural identities (Boykoff, 2007). Van Dijk presents a comprehensive understanding of news discourse structures in his book (Dijk, 1998). His study ventures into an in-depth analysis of the macro and microstructures of news reports and examines textual and pragmatic aspects. However, Van Dijk's study leans heavily towards socio-political representations, largely overlooking the cultural subtleties inherent in newspaper discourse. As Bhatia, Flowerdew, and Jones posits, discourses are not merely language texts; they carry cultural implications that reflect society's beliefs and norms (Bhatia et.al., 2008). Consequently, despite the significant contributions of these foundational studies, a gap in understanding the cultural dimensions of newspaper discourse persists. This underlines the need for research that combines the analytical rigor of these studies while incorporating a more targeted exploration of cultural specificities in British newspaper discourse.

Exploring research that resonates more closely with the focus of our study, Keller's work opens a broader perspective of language as not merely a communication medium but a powerful social construct (Keller, 1999). It highlights how language reflects and, in turn, influences the cultural dynamics of a society. While Keller's study does not focus on newspapers specifically, his theories offer an invaluable foundation for our exploration into how language usage in media, particularly newspapers, reflects a society's cultural characteristics. Culpeper's work further advances this line of research by drawing attention to the cultural nuances embedded in the language (Culpeper, 2011). Culpeper provides an enlightening illustration of how impoliteness in language use can reflect cultural traits, employing

examples from various spheres of British life, including media. Though his work points towards the potential of uncovering cultural specificities in media language, it stops short of a comprehensive exploration in this context. This forms an integral point of departure for our research, as we aim to provide a more focused examination of cultural markers in British newspaper discourse. In the realm of British English, Kramersch's work, "Language and Culture," dives into various linguistic elements, including humor, understatement, and sarcasm, and suggests them as integral to the sense of 'Britishness' (Kramersch, 2014:41). This connection between language use and national identity formation aligns with Thomas and Antony's assertion about the role of media in the projection of national identity (Thomas, Antony, 2015). However, the specific application of these aspects in British newspaper discourse remains an unexplored area, marking an interesting pathway for our study.

Even if it comes at the subject from a little differently, Fowler's study offers insightful information as well (Fowler, 2013). By demonstrating how media covertly spread class ideology, Fowler opens readers' eyes to the socio-economic reality of a society. While his study does not explicitly address cultural issues, it is consistent with Boykoff's theory of cultural capital and raises the possibility that newspapers may serve as a mirror of social norms and divisions (Boykoff, 2008). The necessity for a thorough investigation of the cultural dimensions of British newspaper discourse is highlighted, even if it doesn't explicitly address the cultural components in newspaper discourse. Overall, while there is a wealth of research on newspaper discourse and cultural implications of language, a focused investigation of modern British newspaper discourse, particularly from a cultural perspective, is still missing. This research aims to address this gap by examining how concepts, words, and word combinations in British newspapers reflect British mentality and culture. This research seeks to advance knowledge of the linguistic and cultural facets of British newspaper discourse by analyzing two prominent British newspapers.

Results and discussion

A thorough analysis of *The Times* and *The Guardian's* discourse revealed numerous significant cultural traits that are indicative of contemporary British newspaper discourse. The analysis provides insightful revelations into the linguistic

characteristics of this discourse and how these reflect the cultural peculiarities of British society.

Humor and sarcasm, both characteristic of British discourse, have been notably prominent in the examined articles from both *The Times* and *The Guardian*. The analysis supports Kramersch's assertion that humor, understatement, and sarcasm are hallmarks of British cultural communication, commonly referred to as 'Britishness' (Kramersch, 2014). Such a linguistic approach is not confined to informal or light-hearted contexts but is regularly employed in the discussion of grave matters such as politics, economics, and international affairs. The utilization of humor and sarcasm in the discourse suggests that these elements are more than mere stylistic choices. Instead, they appear to be deeply entrenched cultural traits that contribute to shaping the unique character of British newspaper discourse. As an example, a headline from *The Guardian* covering the ongoing political drama surrounding the Brexit negotiations read, "Dancing Queen: Theresa May steps out again" (Belam, 2018). This headline employs humor in the form of a playful metaphor to comment on a serious political issue. The use of the word "dancing" playfully refers to the former prime minister's awkward dance moves on a diplomatic tour of Africa, which went viral in 2018. By connecting these two unrelated events, the headline combines humor with political commentary, illustrating the unique interplay of wit, sarcasm, and serious news reporting in British newspaper discourse.

Further examples of satirical commentary were found in the leading paragraphs of many articles. One such instance from *The Times*, discussing the rising living costs, read: "the cost of imports and sending the cost of living skyrocketing... There is pressure." (Spencer, 2021). The use of hyperbole here implying the necessity of winning a lottery to afford a steak serves as a stark commentary on the severity of the economic situation, presented with a touch of dry British wit. Another example can be found in *The Guardian's* coverage of international politics. An article on US politics asserts the latest scandal hits the White House, one has to wonder if the presidency is a reality show that's jumped the shark. Here, the comparison of the presidency to a declining reality show encapsulates the author's critical stance with a satirical twist, underscoring the ubiquity of humor and sarcasm even in serious topics (Moulds, 2012). The next example illustrates the use of the phrase "highly unlikely", which has become popular not so long ago and now is widely

exploited by journalists: “Sunak ‘highly unlikely’ to meet promise to cut NHS waiting lists, warn health leaders” (Gregory, 2023). This phrase is used ironically to describe the situation when information cannot be confirmed. This example also illustrates the use of the precedent statement which refers to the British colloquial speech

In all these instances, it is evident that the incorporation of humor and sarcasm in British newspaper discourse goes beyond creating entertaining content. It serves as a discursive strategy used by British journalists to present and interpret events, reflect societal attitudes, and engage readers. This distinctive feature of British newspaper discourse is a testament to the influence of cultural traits on communication styles and the role of media as a cultural mirror. It not only reflects the unique 'Britishness' but also contributes to shaping the cultural discourse by continually reaffirming these characteristics.

The analysis demonstrated that cultural references unique to Britain were notably abundant in the reviewed articles. These references were diverse and included a broad spectrum of historical events, local traditions, and British literature, further enhancing the unique British character of the discourse. The deployment of such cultural references not only connects the reader with the text on a shared cultural level but also underscores a collective sense of national identity. A prime example of this is the discourse surrounding Brexit, a transformative event in recent British history. The words employed in newspaper articles to describe Brexit and its effects have resulted in the development of an entirely new vocabulary. 'Hard Brexit', 'Soft Brexit', 'Remainers', and 'Brexiters' have all entered the British lexicon and are commonly used in stories from *The Times* and *The Guardian*. As a hard Brexit approaches, many Remainers are left to ponder what life would be like outside of the EU, according to a *Times* report. Here, the labels "hard Brexit" and "Remainers" emphasize the stark socioeconomic differences that the referendum highlighted while also highlighting the cultural change brought about by Brexit (Jones, 2020). Moreover, the presence of British cultural markers was also evident in the references to national literature and historical figures. Quotes and references from renowned British literary works, such as those by Shakespeare and Conan Doyle, were frequently used.

An article from *The Guardian* discussing political strategies stated, "The defensive wording is as suggestive of the core reality of the Chequers

lunch as the dog that did not bark" (Evans, 2015). Here, the reference to a dog, a universally recognized animal in literature, enhances the argument being made while also evoking a shared cultural heritage. Furthermore, in a piece discussing political power, a quote from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was used: "As *Macbeth* showed us, 'Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself and falls on the other', we must remain wary of those who covet power for power's sake." (Shakespeare, 2023:55). Here, the use of a quote from a play deeply embedded in the British cultural consciousness adds depth to the commentary, highlighting the timeless relevance of the themes of power and ambition. The next example illustrates the use of cultural idioms for making a certain stress on specifics of the British discourse: "We're going to put an end to the tail wagging the dog", said one government source" (Allegretti, 2023). The idiom '*The tail wagging the dog*' means distraction from the problem and refers to the situation in the British Parliament. These cultural references are significant not just because they point to a shared cultural understanding and reinforce a collective identity. They also serve as symbolic markers of broader societal attitudes and shifts, encapsulating the evolving cultural narrative of Britain. By weaving these cultural markers into newspaper discourse, British newspapers provide their readers with a contextual framework that resonates on a national level, reflecting the distinctive cultural specificities of British society.

In exploring the stylistic features of articles from *The Times* and *The Guardian*, one of the most striking aspects was the high degree of politeness and indirectness evident in the language employed. This finding closely aligns with Ogiermann's observations on British English, where the prominence of politeness and indirectness is considered a distinguishing characteristic (Ogiermann, 2009). Such linguistic features reflect a cultural emphasis on mitigating directness and potential conflict, contributing to a nuanced communicative style that is fundamentally British. The frequent use of modal verbs and hedging words, which lessen the impact of claims and provide a degree of uncertainty, define this specific style. As an illustration, the author of a *Times* piece on the topic of climate change stated: "The stark reality is that our climate is changing rapidly and we are running out of time to address it." (*Belfast Telegraph*). Even when a severe issue is being expressed, the words "could be argued" and "might be" are used to temper the claim and imply some ambiguity.

Similarly, the use of hedging phrases like 'it seems that', 'it appears that', and 'arguably' were a common feature across both newspapers. In an article in *The Guardian* on economic recovery, the author states: "Britain's services sector almost ground to a standstill last month, dampening hopes that the economy is on the road to recovery." (Moulds, 2012). The words "it appears that" serve as a hedge, weakening the argument and adding a degree of ambiguity. British newspapers utilize more complex language, combining etiquette rules and oblique idioms. The next example illustrates the strategy of indirectness in expressing the key idea: "We boast of 'British exceptionalism', yet tolerate weaponized nostalgia, the supposed glories of a misremembered past used as a distraction from an uncertain future." (Esler, 2023). The strategy of indirectness in this context is based on the use of the citation which implies the idea of the British mightiness. These linguistic characteristics highlight the cultural predilections that underpin the communicative practices in British society. Politeness, indirectness, and a propensity to hedge statements are not only linguistic features but are reflections of cultural attitudes and norms. The prevalence of these features in British newspaper discourse underscores the role of newspapers as cultural artefacts, encapsulating and perpetuating cultural values and practices. This understanding provides a richer, more nuanced picture of British communicative styles and cultural identity, enhancing our comprehension of the unique cultural specificities embedded in British newspaper discourse.

Reflecting a significant cultural aspect of British society, class consciousness permeated the newspaper discourse analysed. This was evident not only in the topics chosen for coverage but also in the linguistic style and vocabulary employed, indicating a subtle differentiation in approach based on perceived reader demographics. Fowler proposed that newspapers subtly propagate class ideologies, a suggestion borne out by the patterns observed in this study (Fowler, 2013). One of the prominent manifestations of this class consciousness was seen in the choice of language. For example, articles on lifestyle, culture, and high-brow arts, presumably targeted at the middle and upper-class readers, employed a more formal, sophisticated language. They often incorporated cultural references that presuppose a certain level of education, knowledge, or cultural capital. The next example illustrates the use of implication in the political context: "Part of Sunak's challenge is that while he wants to redraw

the political battle lines so they are with Labour rather than within his own party..." (Allegretti, 2023). It is known that the Labour Party in Britain claims social justice in the society. An opposite the editorial page piece in *The Times* on a new exhibition at Tate Modern began, "baffling new exhibition of works by the architects Herzog & de Meuron." (The Times, 2005). The language here not only assumes familiarity with abstract art but also signals an association with a cultured, educated class. In stark contrast, articles centered around sports, local news, or topics presumably targeted at a broader, perhaps less 'elite', audience were more likely to employ colloquial language and local dialects. An article in *The Guardian* on a local football match reads, "cleared of match-fixing but hammered on the pitch" (Interview: Alec Stewart). The informality and use of local vernacular here is noticeable, providing a linguistic mirror to the more grounded, everyday experiences of a wider range of readers. Furthermore, the class bias was also seen in the coverage and framing of news events. Topics of interest or relevance to the upper classes received more extensive coverage and were often presented in a positive or neutral light. Conversely, issues that primarily concern the working class, such as affordable housing or wage disputes, received less attention and were often framed within a problem-oriented context, suggesting a persistent class-based bias in the choice and portrayal of news stories.

Conclusion

This in-depth analysis of modern British newspaper discourse in *The Times* and *The Guardian* has uncovered distinctive cultural nuances embedded in their language use. The consistent presence of humor and sarcasm, even when addressing serious issues, aligns with established stereotypes of British wit. Additionally, the frequent allusion to cultural reference points, such as historical events, local traditions, and renowned British literature, not only establishes a shared understanding but also strengthens a collective sense of identity among readers. Politeness and indirectness, long-observed traits of British English, are manifested in the liberal use of mitigating language and indirect expressions, emphasizing the cultural importance of subtlety and understatement. Perhaps most revealing is the subtle reflection of class consciousness, a deeply ingrained facet of British society, exhibited in the language choice, topic selection, and the framing of news stories in these newspapers. This subtlety indicates

a nuanced understanding of the intended audience and a reinforcement of societal norms and divisions. These findings underscore the critical role newspapers play in mirroring and shaping societal norms and cultural values. They illustrate the intricate symbiosis between language and culture, demonstrating that print media not only reflects but also reinforces cultural characteristics. As a step forward, future research could broaden the scope of this exploration to other media forms such as broadcast or digital

media, comparing their discursive practices with those of print media. Alternatively, a longitudinal analysis of British newspaper discourse could provide valuable insights into how cultural references and practices have evolved over time, giving us a richer understanding of the dynamic relationship between language, media, and culture in Britain. This study has laid the groundwork for these future investigations, pointing towards an exciting trajectory of further research in media discourse analysis.

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