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OFFICIAL: WHACO JACKO* IS NOT AN ALIEN!

By Eamonn Doherty



Got your attention? A headline has more impact if it is short and clear: today's readers are busy people who don't have time to assimilate or even bother attempting to take in a long string of words.

Furthermore, a long headline somehow gives the impression that the writer just could not express concisely what he/she wanted to say - so the author tries to get all the information into the title. The result could be something like this,

Man dies after dog bites him in the ankle while coming home late from work on Friday evening

This headline is surely the most truthful, informative one you will ever see, but it turns into a short paragraph. Also you know nearly all the story so you won't read the rest of it! Furthermore, a long headline takes up a lot of space and ink.

Many headlines use linguistic devices like puns, onomatopoeia, metaphors, alliteration, rhyming devices (see headline of this article) and so on. Sometimes these tricks of the trade may be unclear, but very often their ingeniousness makes up for any initial perplexity caused to the reader. Some headlines may have to be read

more than once in order to understand exactly what the words mean.

A serious, informative article will usually have a serious headline (and a serious reader): "*Bank interest rates to go up by 1%*". But a human interest type story will usually have a catchy heading to make it stand out from the rest of the page. Most of a normal page is information, and the reader is saturated with that. He/she will only read their favourite section unless a title attracts their attention. The article on the poor, aforementioned victim of animal violence towards humans is not news.

But if the heading is, say, funny ..

HUNGRY DOG THINKS MAN'S LEG IS A BONE

...alliterative...

Angry animal attacks ankle

...onomatopoeic ...

Woof, woof – Ouch!

then the imagination of the reader is stimulated. Another aspect of this is that the journalist who composes this type of heading somehow takes on the role of an entertainer, as well as an artist of words. After all, it is not easy to invent comprehensible, new combinations of words.

Strange to say, even though unusual headlines are really only tricks or a demonstration of art, if this type of headline did not exist, the world (or at least newspapers) would be a sadder place. Headlines that

play with words also, magically play with the mind and the heart of the reader. The motto of a journalist could be: If you want to strike a note with the reader, do not get straight to the point. Could you imagine if every headline was direct and informative? Instead of emotional sentences like "*Lady Di says goodbye*", we would get something like "*Princess Diana was buried yesterday*". I prefer the former as it seems to establish a rapport between the writer and the reader.

* "Wacko Jacko" is the nickname the British tabloids use for Michael Jackson.

Wacko

Pun

Catchy

stand out

Adept

motto

Loco

Juego de palabras

fácil de recordar

destacarse

experto,-a

lema