
A hermeneutic study of cultural codes in English and Uzbek online health and education news

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Annotation *This article examines implicit cultural meanings in English and Uzbek online news headlines on health and education through a hermeneutic lens. The study treats the headline not as a neutral label but as a condensed interpretive act that organizes public attention, value, and responsibility. The pilot corpus consists of eight headlines from The Guardian, Gazeta.uz, and Daryo.uz published between 2023 and 2026. The analysis moves between lexical choice, agency patterns, evaluative framing, and broader cultural horizons of interpretation. The findings suggest that the English headlines in the sample more often foreground social tension, evidence, vulnerability, and policy contestation, while the Uzbek headlines more often foreground institutional initiative, procedural order, and collective welfare. The article argues that these differences do not reveal fixed national essences; rather, they point to recurring editorial preferences shaped by media culture, public discourse, and communicative expectations. The study contributes to comparative media linguistics by showing how cultural meanings often reside in what the headline presupposes rather than explicitly states.*

Keywords *Headlines, hermeneutics, cultural meaning, online media, health news, education news, Uzbek media*

Ingliz va o'zbek onlayn sog'liqni saqlash hamda ta'lim yangiliklaridagi madaniy kodlarning germeneytik tahlili

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Annotatsiya *Ushbu maqolada sog'liqni saqlash va ta'limga oid ingliz hamda o'zbek onlayn yangiliklar sarlavhalaridagi implitsit madaniy ma'nolar germeneytik yondashuv asosida tahlil qilinadi. Sarlavha neytral belgi sifatida emas, balki jamoatchilik e'tibori, baholash va mas'uliyatni tartibga soluvchi ixcham interpretativ akt sifatida talqin qilinadi. Pilot korpus 2023-2026-yillarda The Guardian, Gazeta.uz va Daryo.uz saytlarida e'lon qilingan sakkizta sarlavhadan iborat. Tahlil leksik tanlov, agentlik modeli va baholovchi freymlardan kengroq madaniy talqin ufqlariga qarab harakat qiladi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, ingliz tilidagi sarlavhalar ko'proq ijtimoiy taranglik, dalillilik, zaiflik va siyosat atrofidagi bahsni oldinga chiqaradi, o'zbek tilidagi sarlavhalar esa ko'proq institutsional tashabbus, tartib va jamoaviy farovonlikni ta'kidlaydi. Bu farqlar qat'iy milliy mohiyatni emas, balki mediakultura va kommunikativ kutishlar shakllantiradigan takrorlanuvchi tahririy afzalliklarni ko'rsatadi.*

Kalit so'zlar *Sarlavhalar, germeneytika, madaniy ma'no, onlayn media, sog'liqni saqlash yangiliklari, ta'lim yangiliklari, o'zbek mediasi*

Герменевтическое исследование культурных кодов в англоязычных и узбекоязычных онлайн-новостях о здравоохранении и образовании

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Аннотация *В статье рассматриваются имплицитные культурные смыслы в англоязычных и узбекоязычных онлайн-заголовках новостей о здравоохранении и образовании на основе герменевтического подхода. Заголовок понимается не как нейтральная метка, а как сжатый интерпретационный акт, организующий общественное внимание, оценку и распределение ответственности. Пилотный корпус включает восемь заголовков из The Guardian, Gazeta.uz и Daryo.uz, опубликованных в 2023-2026 годах. Анализ движется от лексического выбора, моделей агентности и оценочного фрейминга к более широким культурным горизонтам интерпретации. Результаты показывают, что англоязычные заголовки в выборке чаще выдвигают на первый план социальное напряжение, доказательность, уязвимость и спорность политики, тогда как узбекоязычные чаще акцентируют институциональную инициативу, процедурный порядок и коллективное благополучие. Статья утверждает, что такие различия не выражают неизменные национальные сущности, а отражают повторяющиеся редакционные предпочтения, формируемые медиакulturой и ожиданиями аудитории.*

Ключевые слова *Заголовки, герменевтика, культурный смысл, онлайн-медиа, новости здравоохранения, образовательные новости, узбекские медиа*

Introduction

News headlines are small textual forms with unusually large cultural force. They do more than summarize an article. In a compressed line, a headline selects angle, sets emotional temperature, allocates agency, and quietly proposes a way of reading the world. This is especially visible in health and education reporting, because both domains are socially moralized: they concern the body, the child, the family, the state, and the future. For that reason, even a short headline can carry assumptions about care, discipline, danger, expertise, and public responsibility.

In media linguistics, headlines have long been understood as strategic discourse units

rather than transparent labels. Bell (1991) and Fowler (1991) showed that news language is never purely descriptive. It always involves selection, ordering, and ideological positioning. Later work in news discourse demonstrated that headlines are central to the construction of newsworthiness because they intensify value, dramatize relevance, and orient readers toward a preferred interpretive route (Bednarek & Caple, 2012, 2014). A headline therefore does not merely present an event. It frames its significance before the article is even opened.

A hermeneutic approach is useful for studying this layer of meaning because headlines often say less than they imply.

Gadamer (2004) argued that understanding emerges within historically shaped horizons, while Ricoeur (1976) emphasized that texts produce a surplus of meaning beyond literal reference. Applied to media discourse, this means that a headline should be read not only for what it names but also for what it presupposes, normalizes, and leaves unsaid. Carter (2013) makes a similar point in her discussion of framing, where media representation is treated as an interpretive construction rather than a neutral reflection of reality.

The present article investigates how implicit cultural meanings are encoded in English and Uzbek online headlines on health and education. The comparison is not designed to essentialize two language communities. Instead, it asks a more modest and more linguistic question: what recurrent editorial preferences become visible when headlines in two media environments organize care, risk, reform, and social order? By focusing on a pilot corpus and combining hermeneutic reading with discourse analysis, the article aims to contribute to comparative headline studies and to the growing discussion of how online media naturalize cultural values through minimal text.

Theoretical framework

This study combines hermeneutics, discourse analysis, and headline studies. From a hermeneutic perspective, interpretation proceeds through the movement between part and whole. A lexical item in a headline can only be fully understood within the social narrative that surrounds it, while the larger narrative itself becomes visible through repeated small textual choices. Such movement is close to what Gadamer (2004) described as the fusion of horizons. The researcher approaches the text with historically informed expectations, but these expectations are revised through close engagement with the text.

From media discourse studies, the article draws on the idea that news values are not simply pre-existing qualities of events. They are discursively produced. Bednarek and Caple

(2014) argue that newsworthiness is created through language and image, not merely detected by journalists. This idea is particularly useful for the analysis of health and education headlines, where urgency, vulnerability, authority, and improvement are rarely neutral descriptors. They are linguistic resources that turn complex social processes into cognitively manageable public stories.

The article also draws on critical discourse studies. Van Dijk (1988) demonstrated that news structures reproduce socially shared models of events, while Wodak and Meyer (2016) emphasized the importance of linking textual detail with broader social practice. In the present case, the emphasis falls on evaluative wording, grammatical agency, and the balance between institutional and human-centered framing. Hall's (1997) work on representation is equally relevant, because cultural meaning does not simply reside in vocabulary itself. It is produced when vocabulary enters shared systems of classification and value.

Finally, existing work on headlines supports a contrastive perspective. Bonyadi and Samuel (2013) show that headline form and function vary across contexts, and headline language often reflects culturally preferred rhetorical patterns. This opens a path for a comparative reading of English and Uzbek online media, particularly in policy-sensitive areas such as schooling, public hygiene, and child welfare.

Materials and Methods

The study uses a purposive pilot corpus of eight online headlines published between 2023 and 2026. Four English headlines were selected from The Guardian, and four Uzbek headlines were selected from Gazeta.uz and Daryo.uz. The outlets were chosen because they are widely read digital platforms with regular coverage of public affairs. The headline had to satisfy three criteria: first, it had to relate directly to health or education; second, it had to contain clear evaluative, institutional, or cultural cues; third, it had to be published as a

news headline rather than as an advertising slogan or purely entertainment content.

The analysis is qualitative and hermeneutic rather than statistical. Each headline was examined for five dimensions: (1) agency, that is, who acts and who is affected; (2) evaluative wording, especially lexical items that moralize, dramatize, or normalize; (3) temporal orientation, for example crisis, continuity, or projected improvement; (4) social scale, including the balance between individual, family, institution, and nation; and (5) implicit cultural meaning, inferred through the relation

between linguistic form and broader discourse context. The method moves from close reading to cross-headline comparison and then back to the larger cultural frame.

Because the corpus is intentionally small, the study does not claim exhaustive representation of either English-language or Uzbek-language media. Its goal is interpretive depth. The value of a pilot corpus lies in making implicit editorial tendencies visible with precision and caution. This design is appropriate for headline analysis, where a single lexical choice can be semiotically dense.

Outlet / language	Date	Headline
The Guardian / English	05.02.2025	School phone bans alone do not improve grades or wellbeing, UK study
The Guardian / English	17.04.2025	A third of school staff in England report 'physical underdevelopment' in poor students
The Guardian / English	16.05.2025	'Much-needed grit' to be fostered in England's schoolchildren, say ministers
The Guardian / English	12.04.2026	Fried nuggets and steamed sponges off menu in school food overhaul in England
Gazeta.uz / Uzbek	20.06.2023	Maktablarda maxsus ijtimoiy-emotsional o'quv soatlari joriy etiladi
Gazeta.uz / Uzbek	08.02.2025	O'zbekistonda "Toza qo'llar" dasturi ishga tushiriladi
Daryo.uz / Uzbek	08.05.2025	Sog'liqni saqlash va ta'lim tashkilotlarida ichimlik suvi ta'minoti yaxshilanadi
Daryo.uz / Uzbek	11.04.2026	O'zbekistonda yangi o'quv yili uchun 1-sinfqa qabul tartibi tasdiqlandi

Table 1. *Pilot corpus of health and education headlines selected for hermeneutic analysis*

Analysis and Discussion

The English headlines in the corpus show a strong tendency toward problematization. Even when the topic is policy, the headline tends to foreground conflict, insufficiency, or social alarm. The line "School phone bans alone do not improve grades or wellbeing, UK study" is a good example. The adverb "alone" is structurally small but interpretively powerful. It presupposes an existing public desire for simple disciplinary solutions and immediately limits that desire. The phrase "UK study" adds evidential authority, so the headline

simultaneously contests a policy cliché and legitimizes its correction through research. The implicit cultural meaning is not merely that phone bans are ineffective in isolation. It is that public policy ought to be evidence-led, and that symbolic control without systemic support is intellectually suspect.

The headline "A third of school staff in England report 'physical underdevelopment' in poor students" pushes a different set of meanings. The initial fraction gives numerical gravity before the reader meets the problem itself. The quoted phrase "physical

underdevelopment” carries a clinical sharpness that intensifies alarm, while “poor students” transforms poverty from background condition into direct explanatory frame. Here the school appears as a diagnostic social institution, almost a sensor that detects the material consequences of inequality. The headline does not simply report an observation. It invites the reader to interpret educational space as a site where economic deprivation becomes visible on the body.

A related pattern appears in “Much-needed grit to be fostered in England’s schoolchildren, say ministers.” The lexical center is “grit,” a term that has strong moral and ideological charge in contemporary Anglo-American public discourse. It indexes resilience, self-management, and endurance. At the same time, the quotation marks suggest mediated distance. The headline reports the term, but it does not fully naturalize it. This tension is culturally significant. The line presents emotional strength as a public virtue while also allowing room for scepticism toward policy rhetoric. The child is constructed here not simply as someone who needs help, but as a subject to be shaped in accordance with a moral economy of endurance.

The most concrete of the English examples is “Fried nuggets and steamed sponges off menu in school food overhaul in England.” The headline is memorable because it enters policy through the everyday lexicon of the lunch table. Instead of naming reform in abstract bureaucratic terms, it names specific foods. This makes public health immediate, domestic, and embodied. At the same time, the verb phrase “off menu” implies removal, discipline, and intervention. The implicit cultural meaning is that educational institutions are legitimate sites for regulating routine habits, and that nutrition policy becomes persuasive when rendered through ordinary material detail.

Taken together, the English sample suggests an editorial preference for visible tension. The headlines repeatedly mobilize

either evidence against simplification, symptoms of inequality, moralized resilience, or concrete restrictions in everyday practice. The child appears as vulnerable, governable, or in need of protection, but rarely in a neutral space. A public issue becomes headline-worthy when it is made contestable, measurable, or affectively striking. This observation is compatible with headline studies that connect newsworthiness with evaluation and intensified relevance (Bednarek & Caple, 2014).

The Uzbek headlines in the pilot corpus operate differently. Their most salient feature is the prominence of institutional initiative. The headline “O‘zbekistonda ‘Toza qo‘llar’ dasturi ishga tushiriladi” is grammatically simple, yet culturally dense. The phrase “ishga tushiriladi” presents action as organized launch. Hygiene is framed not through fear or scandal but through programmatic initiation. The headline constructs cleanliness as a planned collective good, and the state or institution remains the implied organizer of this good. The symbolic center is not crisis but mobilized care.

The same pattern is visible in “Sog‘liqni saqlash va ta’lim tashkilotlarida ichimlik suvi ta’minoti yaxshilanadi.” The future-oriented predicate “yaxshilanadi” projects improvement rather than foregrounding prior failure. Importantly, health and education institutions are linked in one syntactic frame. This linkage implies a broad welfare infrastructure rather than an isolated administrative measure. Water here is not only a material resource. It becomes an index of orderly social provision. The headline encodes optimism through administrative futurity. Its implicit message is that collective wellbeing is secured through enhancement of systems.

The education headline “O‘zbekistonda yangi o‘quv yili uchun 1-sinfga qabul tartibi tasdiqlandi” relies on procedural vocabulary. The central noun is “tartib,” or order, procedure, rule. The key verb is “tasdiqlandi,” approved. The headline offers regulation as reassurance. It does not dramatize competition, anxiety, or parental uncertainty, although all

these may exist in the wider social field. Instead, it presents education as a sphere stabilized by formal sequence. The implicit cultural meaning is that legitimate schooling begins with recognized procedure and that public trust is produced through official confirmation.

A particularly revealing line is "Maktablarda maxsus ijtimoiy-emotsional o'quv soatlari joriy etiladi." In many media contexts, student mental health enters headlines through crisis vocabulary such as stress, depression, or breakdown. Here, however, social-emotional concerns are introduced through curricular language: special lessons will be introduced. This shifts the interpretive frame from psychological disturbance to pedagogical inclusion. Care becomes legitimate when formalized inside school structure. The child is not represented primarily as endangered but as someone whose emotional development can be institutionally organized.

Across the Uzbek sample, the dominant editorial movement is from institution to society, not from symptom to scandal. The headlines foreground launch, improvement, approval, and introduction. These verbal choices reduce overt conflict and increase procedural clarity. The underlying cultural code appears to value coordinated initiative, public order, and collective administration of welfare. This does not mean that Uzbek media lack critique. Rather, in the selected headlines on health and education, social care is discursively packaged through implementation and regulation.

The comparison between the two samples can be summarized in three broad contrasts. First, the English headlines tend to make the issue dramatic through conflict, deficit, or argumentative tension, while the Uzbek headlines tend to make the issue intelligible through policy action and institutional sequence. Second, English headlines more often foreground a visible symptom or contested claim, whereas Uzbek headlines more often foreground the

mechanism of improvement. Third, the English examples more frequently encode a reader position of critical observation, while the Uzbek examples more frequently encode a reader position of informed participation in collective reform.

These contrasts should not be turned into rigid oppositions. Media cultures are internally diverse, and a larger corpus would certainly reveal overlap. English media also publish procedural headlines, and Uzbek media also publish conflict-driven ones. Still, the pilot corpus suggests that implicit cultural meaning often resides in the grammatical and lexical route chosen for public communication. Whether a headline chooses "do not improve," "physical underdevelopment," and "grit," or chooses "ishga tushiriladi," "yaxshilanadi," and "tasdiqlandi," it is already teaching the reader how to imagine society: as a field of contest, diagnosis, and correction, or as a field of coordinated provision, order, and implementation.

Analytical dimension	English sample	Uzbek sample
Dominant social image	Problem, evidence, vulnerability, dispute	Program, order, improvement, implementation
Preferred agency	Researchers, ministers, staff, policy actors in debate	Institutions and procedures as stabilizing actors
Temporal orientation	Immediate concern and corrective response	Planned change and projected enhancement
Implicit reader role	Critical observer of public problems	Participant in collective administrative order
Cultural code suggested by sample	Agonistic public reasoning	Programmatic welfare governance

Table 2. *Dominant interpretive tendencies in the pilot corpus*

Conclusion

This article has argued that health and education headlines are culturally saturated forms of minimal discourse. Through a hermeneutic reading of a pilot corpus from English and Uzbek online media, the study shows that the most meaningful layer of a headline often lies in what it silently organizes: who is imagined as responsible, what kind of future is projected, and how care is made publicly legible. In the English sample, headline meaning is frequently built through contestation, alarm, evidence, and morally charged debate. In the Uzbek sample, meaning is more often built through programmatic action, procedural approval, institutional provision, and collective order.

The value of this comparison lies not in ranking one model above another, but in demonstrating that cultural meaning enters

media language through ordinary lexical and grammatical decisions. A headline can stage a social problem as controversy, or it can stage it as organized improvement. It can place the reader inside critique, or inside administrative reassurance. Such choices matter because repeated headline patterns shape public common sense over time.

The study is limited by its small corpus and exploratory design. Future research could expand the dataset, add more outlets, include multimodal features such as images and subheadings, and examine how headline patterns shift across crisis periods or policy cycles. Even so, the present analysis confirms that comparative media linguistics benefits from attention to the implicit. What headlines leave unsaid is often where culture speaks most clearly.

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