

Constructing Regional Identity in English and Lithuanian Newspaper Headlines: A Comparative Discourse Analysis

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Abstract. This research investigates the linguistic construction of regional identity in English and Lithuanian newspaper headlines using a comparative approach that combines qualitative discourse analysis with quantitative method. The research is based on a corpus of approximately 300 headlines collected from four regional newspapers: *Manchester Evening News* and *Liverpool Echo* (United Kingdom) as well as *Šiaulių kraštas* ‘Šiauliai Region’ and *Vakarų ekspresas* ‘Western Express’ (Lithuania). The analysis focuses on structural and stylistic features characteristic of headline discourse, including ellipsis, nominalisation, metaphor, word-play, allusion, as well as emotive and evaluative language. The findings demonstrate that headlines in both languages rely on syntactic compression to convey information efficiently, although the specific realisations differ due to typological differences between English and Lithuanian. English headlines frequently employ ellipsis through the omission of articles and auxiliary verbs, whereas Lithuanian headlines tend to favour noun-based constructions and reduced clause structures. In both corpora, regional identity is constructed through frequent references to place names, local institutions, and community actors, which contextualise the news discourse within a specific geographical and social context. The research also reveals that English headlines more often use expressive strategies, such as emotive and evaluative language, metaphorical framing, while Lithuanian headlines demonstrate a relatively more informational and community-oriented style, though they also incorporate stylistic devices. Overall, the results highlight the role of headlines as condensed yet effective discursive units that shape representations of regional reality.

Key words: regional identity, newspaper headlines, media, discourse analysis, structural features, stylistic features.

Regioninės tapatybės raiška angliškų ir lietuviškų laikraščių antraštėse: lyginamoji diskurso analizė

Anotacija. Šiame tyrime nagrinėjama regioninės tapatybės raiška angliškų ir lietuviškų laikraščių antraštėse, taikant lyginamąją kokybinę diskurso analizę ir kiekybinį metodą. Tyrimui pasitelktos maždaug 300 antraščių, surinktų iš keturių regioninių laikraščių: *Manchester Evening News* ir *Liverpool Echo* (Jungtinė Karalystė) bei *Šiaulių kraštas* ir *Vakarų ekspresas* (Lietuva). Analizėje dėmesys skiriamas antraščių diskursui būdingiems struktūriniais ir stilistiniais bruožams, tokiems kaip elipsė, nominalizacija, vertinamoji leksika, metafora, žodžių žaismas ir aliuizijos. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad abiejų kalbų laikraščių antraštėse plačiai taikomas

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sintaksinis glaudinimas, leidžiantis perteikti informaciją glaustai, tačiau jo raiška skiriasi dėl tipologinių anglų ir lietuvių kalbų ypatybių. Anglų kalbos antraštėse dažnai pasitaiko elipsė, pasireiškianti artikelių ir pagalbinių veiksmažodžių praleidimu, o lietuvių kalbos antraštėse labiau vyrauja daiktavardinė raiška ir suglaudintos sakinio struktūros. Abiejų kalbų laikraščių antraštėse regioninė tapatybė konstruojama per dažnas vietovardžių, vietinių institucijų ir bendruomenės veikėjų nuorodas, kurios įtvirtina naujų diskursą konkrečiame geografiniame ir socialiniame kontekste. Tyrimas taip pat atskleidžia, kad anglų kalbos antraštės dažniau pasižymi ekspresyvesnėmis ir dėmesį patraukiančiomis kalbinėmis struktūromis, tokiomis kaip vertinamoji leksika, metaforinis conceptualizavimas, tuo tarpu lietuvių kalbos antraštėse labiau išryškėja informacinis ir bendruomeniškas pobūdis, nors jose taip pat vartojamos stilistinės priemonės. Apskritai tyrimo rezultatai patvirtina, kad antraštės yra glaustos, tačiau itin paveikios diskurso vienetai, formuojantys regioninės tikrovės pavaizdavimą.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: regioninė tapatybė, laikraščių antraštės, žiniasklaida, diskurso analizė, struktūriniai požymiai, stilistiniai požymiai.

Introduction

Recent approaches in regional studies view regions not as fixed territorial entities, but as spaces produced through cultural, political, historical, and discursive processes. Regions emerge through shared meanings and collective identification rather than territorial boundaries alone. As Djatkovica (2024, p. 140) notes, “the region-building approach centres on regionality’s subjective and contextual nature”. This discursive process is linked to institutional self-understanding and regional persistence, since “the region building is intertwined with the region’s ontological status” and depends on how state and regional narratives align (Ibid., p. 141). However, governance rescaling often overlooks embedded “practices,” “relationships,” and “identities” that shape how new spatial arrangements function (Gherhes et al. 2023, p. 1). Regional identity is therefore understood as a socially constructed narrative shaped by elements such as history, culture, landscape, and stereotypes, which together contribute to the formation of imagined and relatively bounded identities (Paasi, 2003). In this study, regional identity is treated as a discursive representation of belonging, examined through how newspapers linguistically construct regional distinctiveness via place references, actors, and culturally specific meanings.

Regional newspapers play a significant role in shaping public discourse and constructing the identity of local communities. To cite Reah (2002, p. 67), “newspapers are cultural artefacts and will reflect the prevailing norms and mores of the culture they represent”. Unlike national media, regional media focuses on events, institutions, and social groups that are directly connected to a specific geographical area (Franklin, 2006; Hess & Waller, 2017). As Hess and Waller (2017, p. 1) observe, “the local newspaper in particular stood alongside the bank and the post office, housed in prominent buildings on the main streets of cities and towns throughout the world. The local newspaper building was usually a solid edifice in the centre of town – reliable and imposing”. This symbolic and social role of local newspapers extends beyond their physical presence within the community. As Zhang (2025, p. 125) notes, “Local news is an influential medium for reflecting and recording community life, and this influence is beyond the value of information dissemination; it is

in the sentiment of belonging and identity of a community. The role of local news and its influence on multicultural happenings is vital in terms of facilitating understanding and social integration between different cultures – which ultimately contributes to social cohesion”. Together, these perspectives highlight the broader cultural and social significance of local newspapers in shaping community identity and reinforcing regional belonging.

Through linguistic choices and discursive strategies, newspaper headlines not only inform readers but also contribute to the representation of regional identity. As noted by Reah (2002, p. 13), “the headline is a unique type of text”. Early linguistic studies of headlines demonstrated that they represent a specialised journalistic register characterised by syntactic reduction and creative word formation (Mårdh, 1980; Bell, 1991). Other studies have further highlighted the role of headlines in framing news events and guiding readers’ interpretation of the accompanying articles (Dor, 2003; Bednarek & Caple, 2017). For instance, Dor (2003) examines how newspaper headlines function as relevance optimisers, balancing informativeness with cognitive effort to capture readers’ attention efficiently. Bednarek & Caple (2017) analyse how news organizations construct and communicate newsworthiness through language, framing, and editorial choices. They explore the interplay between journalistic practices, linguistic strategies, and audience expectations in shaping which events are presented as “newsworthy”.

More recent research by Scott (2023) analyses “deceptive clickbait” headlines, showing that although they often resemble traditional news headlines, they pragmatically guide readers toward interpretations not supported by the article content. She argues that readers are justified in this interpretation, placing responsibility on writers, and suggests that such headlines may in some cases constitute forms of lying rather than mere misleading. Similarly, Borchmann (2024), using illocutionary subacts, demonstrates that headline functions vary systematically across genres (news, analysis, columns) and cautions against generalising linguistic features across journalism, emphasising the need for genre-controlled pragmatic analysis. The research by Shaker (2025) examines how different media platforms shape the legitimation and public acceptance of smart city initiatives. The study shows that traditional news headlines tend to reinforce institutional framings, while social media formats such as hashtags enable more distributed and participatory interpretations.

Despite extensive research on media discourse and headline language, comparative studies examining the linguistic representation of regional identity across languages remain limited. Cross-linguistic approaches are valuable for identifying both universal journalistic conventions and language-specific discourse strategies, as shown in analyses of Australian and French news headlines (Develotte & Rechniewski, 2001), Lithuanian headlines compared with Croatian (Podboj & Vitkūnė-Bajorinienė, 2025), and Lithuanian and American online news (Vengalienė, 2011), among others. Such research highlights the methodological importance of cross-cultural media discourse analysis, revealing how linguistic, cognitive, and cultural mechanisms shape the representation of local and national identities in news texts (Bednarek & Caple, 2017).

Although newspaper headlines have been widely studied in media linguistics and discourse analysis, research has focused predominantly on national media, political

communication, sensationalism, and structural headline features within single-language contexts. Far less attention has been given to the discursive construction of regional identity, particularly from a cross-linguistic perspective. Studies comparing English and Lithuanian regional headlines remain especially limited. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this research gap by conducting a comparative discourse analysis of English and Lithuanian regional newspaper headlines. The research focuses on how regional identity is linguistically represented through structural and stylistic features characteristic of headline discourse.

The present research aims to examine and compare how regional identity is linguistically constructed in English and Lithuanian regional newspaper headlines through the use of structural and stylistic features.

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How is regional identity constructed in English and Lithuanian newspaper headlines?
2. What structural and stylistic features are used to represent regional communities and places?
3. What similarities and differences exist in the discursive construction of regional identity in English and Lithuanian headlines?

This research proposes the following hypothesis:

English regional newspaper headlines are expected to exhibit stronger syntactic compression and more explicit evaluative language, whereas Lithuanian headlines are expected to place greater emphasis on local communities, place names, and regional belonging; although metaphor, allusion, and other rhetorical devices are used in both contexts to construct regional identity, their stylistic realisation is expected to differ across the two languages.

The study contributes to research on media discourse and regionalism by examining how headline language participates in the symbolic construction of locality and belonging. Through a comparative analysis of English regional newspapers (*Manchester Evening News* and *Liverpool Echo*) and Lithuanian regional newspapers (*Šiaulių kraštas* and *Vakarų ekspresas*), this research seeks to reveal how structural and stylistic choices shape representations of regional space, community, and cultural identity across different media and linguistic contexts.

Theoretical Prerequisites: Linguistic Strategies Used in Newspaper Headlines

The language of the media has long been recognised as an important object of linguistic analysis because media discourse not only reflects social reality but also actively constructs it through linguistic representation (Fairclough, 1995). News discourse is inherently selective: journalists choose which events to report and how these events are framed linguistically, thereby shaping the interpretation of social phenomena by audiences (van Dijk, 1988). From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, such choices are not

neutral but reflect broader ideological, institutional, and cultural structures that influence how social groups, events, and places are represented in the public sphere (Fowler, 1991; Fairclough, 1995). As Hall (1997, p. 1) notes, “Language is one of the ‘media’ through which thoughts, ideas and feelings are represented in a culture”. Consequently, the media play a central role in the construction of meanings and identities within contemporary societies.

Within journalistic discourse, headlines represent a distinctive textual genre that operates under specific communicative and structural constraints (Bell, 1991; Bednarek & Caple, 2012). Headlines are designed to summarise the central message of a news story while simultaneously attracting readers’ attention and encouraging them to read the full article (Dor, 2003; Bednarek & Caple, 2017). Because headlines must fulfil these functions within limited textual space, they have developed a specialised linguistic register often referred to as *headlineese* (Mårdh, 1980). This register is characterised by a high degree of linguistic compression and the frequent use of unconventional syntactic and lexical patterns that differ from standard written language.

Ellipsis is one of the most prominent structural features of newspaper headline language. In linguistic terms, ellipsis refers to the omission of grammatical elements that would normally appear in complete sentences. In English headlines, this frequently involves the omission of articles, auxiliary verbs, and sometimes subjects in order to reduce textual length and increase informational density (Mårdh, 1980; Bell, 1991). Such elliptical constructions are characteristic of headline discourse, enabling newspapers to communicate information rapidly while maintaining immediacy, readability, and rhetorical impact.

From a comparative perspective, the manifestation of ellipsis differs across languages due to their grammatical structure. Lithuanian, unlike English, does not use articles and relies less frequently on auxiliary verbs in predicate constructions, which influences the forms of syntactic reduction found in headlines. Ellipsis is generally understood as a type of grammatical cohesion involving the omission of an implied linguistic unit in a text. As Česnuliienė (2013, p. 64) argues, such omission is not accidental but functionally meaningful: elements expressed in one context and omitted in another contribute to the underlying structure and interpretation of the text. Lithuanian headline discourse also demonstrates elliptical constructions, most commonly through the omission of subjects, copular verbs, or other predictable sentence elements.

A characteristic feature of headline language is nominalisation, the process by which verbs, adjectives, or entire clauses are transformed into nouns or noun phrases. Nominalisation allows complex actions or processes to be expressed in a highly condensed form and facilitates the construction of compact headline structures (Fowler, 1991; Sušinskienė, 2010; 2017). In English, for example, instead of using a full clause such as *The government decided to raise taxes*, a headline may employ a nominalised structure such as *Government tax increase decision*. Such constructions contribute to the informational density of headlines while foregrounding key actors or events.

In Lithuanian, nominalisation likewise plays a significant role in compact linguistic expression. Lithuanian grammar forms nominalisations primarily through derivational

morphology, most commonly by attaching suffixes such as *-imas/-ymas* to verbs to create action nouns (e.g., *spręsti* → *sprendimas* “decision”) and by using participial forms as noun-like constructions. Moreover, nominalisation patterns in Lithuanian differ in some respects from English due to the rich inflectional and derivational morphology of Lithuanian. For example, Sušinskienė and Vaskelienė (2020) demonstrate that Lithuanian deverbal nominalisations can be formed with a much wider range of suffixes than in English, reflecting typological differences in word-formation systems. Moreover, Žarnauskaitė’s (2022) study of verb-based nominalisation patterns in English and Lithuanian legal texts highlights that Lithuanian nominalisations may also involve adjective-based nominal forms in addition to verb-based ones, whereas English equivalents often rely on syntactic or morphological strategies unique to Germanic languages.

Beyond structural compression (ellipsis and nominalisation), newspaper headlines frequently employ a variety of stylistic devices designed to enhance the communicative impact of news discourse. Because headlines must convey essential information within extremely limited textual space, journalists often rely on expressive linguistic strategies that allow them to communicate complex ideas in a condensed yet rhetorically engaging form. Such strategies include metaphor, wordplay, intertextual allusions, as well as emotive and evaluative language, which together contribute to the framing of news events and influence how readers interpret the information presented (Richardson, 2007; Bednarek & Caple, 2017). Research on Lithuanian media discourse similarly emphasises that stylistic expressiveness and rhetorical devices play an important role in shaping the persuasive and interpretative functions of journalistic texts (Marcinkevičienė, 2008; Koženiauskienė, 2009; 2013).

One of the most significant stylistic devices in headline discourse is metaphor, which allows complex political, economic, or social processes to be conceptualised through vivid imagery. As Charteris-Black (2004:7) notes, “Metaphor is a figure of speech that is typically used in persuasion; this is because it represents a novel way of viewing the world that offers some fresh insight”. In news discourse, events such as economic crises are often described using metaphors like storm, collapse, or battle, framing them as dramatic conflicts or disasters. Such metaphorical representations emphasise conflict and crisis and influence how readers interpret events (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Richardson, 2007). Research on Lithuanian media language similarly shows that metaphors intensify emotional impact and help interpret complex political or social processes (Marcinkevičienė, 2008; Koženiauskienė, 2009), often framing them through imagery of struggle, confrontation, or movement.

Another notable feature of headline discourse is the use of wordplay, allusions, and other forms of linguistic creativity. These devices typically rely on lexical ambiguity, phonological similarity, or semantic associations (Reah, 2002; Dor, 2003). Wordplay, for instance, exploits multiple meanings of words or expressions, allowing journalists to condense several interpretative layers into a short textual form. Research on newspaper headlines shows that ambiguity and playful lexical choices are often deliberately used to optimise relevance and stimulate reader curiosity, encouraging readers to interpret the

headline and continue to the full article (Devellote & Rechniewski, 2001; Dor, 2003). Studies of headline discourse further demonstrate that such linguistic creativity enables journalists to communicate evaluative meanings and cultural associations within the spatial constraints characteristic of headline discourse.

Closely related to wordplay is the use of allusion, which involves indirect references to well-known cultural texts, historical events, literary works, or popular expressions (Abrams & Harpham, 2013, p. 13). In stylistic analysis, allusion is commonly understood as a form of intertextuality, whereby a text evokes meanings associated with other texts or culturally shared knowledge (Allen, 2011). Because newspaper headlines operate under strict spatial constraints, allusive expressions allow journalists to activate readers' background knowledge and convey complex meanings in a condensed form. Such intertextual signals enable readers to interpret texts by linking them to familiar cultural narratives or linguistic patterns.

From a comparative perspective, research on expressive means in online media headlines demonstrates that metaphors, phraseologisms, rhetorical questions, and other linguistic tools contribute to emotional-expressive effects and multiple interpretations in both Lithuanian and English news portals. Comparative discourse analyses also show that Lithuanian headlines exhibit narrative and attention-grabbing strategies that mirror broader trends in online media while retaining language-specific traits (Podboj & Vitkūnė-Bajorinienė, 2025). Additionally, studies of recreated phraseology in Lithuanian media highlight how modified phraseological units and syntactic devices are used stylistically to convey nuance, irony, and humour (Koženiauskienė, 2013). Analysing these linguistic features thus provides valuable insight into how different cultural and linguistic contexts shape the representation of events and identities in regional media discourse.

Newspaper headlines often use evaluative and emotive vocabulary to condense events into brief phrases that convey judgment and influence reader perception before the article is read. Evaluative words (e.g., *shocking*, *controversial*) signal approval, disapproval, or significance, while emotive terms (e.g., *slammed*, *tragedy*) evoke emotional responses and increase engagement (Bell, 1991; Fairclough, 1995). In journalism, affectivity is conveyed through evaluative and epistemic markers that guide interpretation and align readers with particular viewpoints (Koivunen et al., 2021), while similar emotive-evaluative vocabulary on social media often frames conflict and intensifies affective responses (Nikitin et al., 2022). These strategies are especially significant in regional newspapers, where headlines frequently emphasise local impact or controversy to engage community audiences and reflect local news values.

Taken together, these structural and stylistic strategies demonstrate that headline discourse represents a complex linguistic genre that combines informational, expressive, and persuasive functions. Although English and Lithuanian headlines differ in certain grammatical aspects due to structural differences between the two languages, both media traditions rely on similar stylistic techniques – such as metaphor, wordplay, intertextual allusion, as well as emotive and evaluative language – to enhance the communicative effectiveness of headlines. A comparative analysis of these strategies therefore provides

insights into how media discourse constructs social meanings and represents local or regional realities within different linguistic and cultural contexts.

Methodological Considerations

This research employs a comparative discourse-analytical approach to examine how regional identity is constructed in English and Lithuanian regional newspaper headlines. The analysis focuses on the linguistic structures through which regional places, communities, and events are represented in regional media discourse. This research employs both qualitative discourse analysis and quantitative analysis to examine recurrent linguistic and discursive patterns in English and Lithuanian regional newspaper headlines, with emphasis placed on identifying dominant tendencies rather than statistical generalisation. The analysis examines key linguistic features such as ellipsis, nominalisation, metaphor, wordplay, allusion, and evaluative/emotive language, with particular attention to how place names, institutions, and community references construct regional identity.

The empirical corpus consists of headlines collected from four regional newspapers published in the United Kingdom and Lithuania. The English-language dataset includes headlines from *Manchester Evening News* and *Liverpool Echo*, while the Lithuanian-language dataset comprises headlines from *Šiaulių kraštas* and *Vakarų ekspresas*. These newspapers were selected according to several criteria: strong regional orientation, regular coverage of local political, economic, cultural, and community-related issues, comparable journalistic format, and accessible online archives. The use of comparable regional newspapers from both countries enabled a systematic cross-linguistic comparison of headline discourse.

The corpus comprises approximately 300 headlines, including 150 English-language and 150 Lithuanian-language headlines collected from the online editions of the selected newspapers between January and March 2026. In order to ensure comparability and thematic diversity, only headlines related to regional politics, economy and business, culture, and community or social issues were included in the corpus. The dataset was subsequently divided into two language-based sub-corpora to facilitate comparative analysis.

Discursive Construction of Regional Identity

Structural Features of Regional Newspaper Headlines in English and Lithuanian

Newspaper headlines in both English and Lithuanian are characterized by syntactic compression, which allows complex information to be conveyed in a limited space. The corpus shows that this is mainly achieved through ellipsis and nominalisation, which increase informational density. In regional journalism, these devices also serve a discursive function: by foregrounding place names, local institutions, and community actors, headlines emphasise local relevance and strengthen regional identity. For example:

- (1) *Manchester Airport flight to Dubai ordered to turn around mid-air after Iran strikes* (*Manchester Evening News*, 16/03/26)

A fully grammatical sentence would read: [A] *Manchester Airport flight to Dubai* [was] *ordered to turn around mid-air after Iran strikes*. The omission of *a* and *was* produces a more urgent tone, while placing *Manchester Airport* at the start highlights local significance in an international story. Consider more examples:

- (2) *Salford brewery Seven Brothers announces closure of MediaCity site* (*Manchester Evening News*, 12/03/26)
- (3) *Opening date for pub inside 'magnificent' 100-year-old building confirmed* (*Liverpool Echo*, 13/03/26)

The omission of *the* in front of *closure* and other elements allows *Salford* and *MediaCity* to dominate the headline, emphasising local identity and economic impact. By omitting *has been confirmed*, the headline foregrounds the historic pub and building, connecting the story to local heritage and community memory.

In Lithuanian headlines, ellipsis is common in dash constructions and verb omission, often highlighting place names and regional activities:

- (4) *Kovo 11-ąją Šiauliuose – iššilmės, žygiai ir koncertai* ‘On March 11 in Šiauliai – ceremonies, marches, and concerts’ (*Šiaulių kraštas*, 13/03/26)

Expanded, the sentence would read: *Kovo 11-ąją Šiauliuose vyks iššilmės, žygiai ir koncertai* ‘On March 11 celebrations, marches, and concerts will take place in Šiauliai’. The dash foregrounds *Šiauliuose*, framing a national event through a local lens and reinforcing regional participation in broader cultural identity. Similarly, in the headlines:

- (5) *Šiaulių bulvare – besmegenių paroda* ‘Snowman exhibition is taking place on Šiauliai Boulevard’ (*Šiaulių kraštas*, 09/01/26)
- (6) *Klaipėdoje tris vakarus stebins šviesų festivalis* ‘The Light Festival will amaze Klaipėda for three evening’ (*Vakarų ekspresas*, 18/02/26)

The verb *vyksta* ‘is taking place’ is omitted, creating a close connection between *Šiaulių bulvare* and *besmegenių paroda*, linking the event to a symbolic local space. Although the verb *stebins* ‘will amaze’ is present, auxiliary elements and context are omitted, keeping the focus on *Klaipėdoje* and emphasising regional location as the primary focus.

Ellipsis in both English and Lithuanian headlines thus functions as more than a structural device: it foregrounds local places, institutions, and community events, giving prominence to elements that define the region. By removing grammatical redundancy, newspapers create concise headlines that not only inform but also reinforce regional identity and readers’ sense of belonging.

In headlines, the process of nominalisation increases informational density, creates an official or formal tone, and often frames local developments as structured and significant processes. In English headlines, nominalisation frequently appears in political, economic, and infrastructural reporting:

- (7) *Council to decide next steps in £250m project in Stockport after bat roosts discovered* (Manchester Evening News, 15/03/26)

The example demonstrates a combination of ellipsis and syntactic compression (partial nominalisation). The headline employs an infinitival construction *to decide* instead of a finite verb form, while the reduced passive clause *roosts discovered* omits the auxiliary verb *have been*. The phrase *next steps* condenses a forthcoming decision-making process into a compact noun phrase, contributing to informational density. At the same time, the reference to *Stockport* functions as a locational marker, situating the event within a specific regional context. Consider more examples:

- (8) *The battle for Liverpool Council has begun after Aigburth by-election* (Liverpool Echo, 13/03/26)

Here, the headline combines a metaphorical framing with a standard clause structure. The noun *battle* functions as a metaphor, conceptualising political competition as conflict, thereby increasing the dramatic impact of the headline. While this noun can be interpreted as a form of nominalisation, the headline remains structurally clause-based due to the presence of the finite verb *has begun*. The reference to *Liverpool Council* and *Aigburth by-election* situates the event within a specific regional and institutional context, emphasising its local political relevance.

- (9) *All the locations around the Trafford Centre lined up for traffic offence crackdown* (Manchester Evening News, 13/03/26)

In the headline above, *crackdown* nominalises law enforcement activity, while *Trafford Centre* grounds the story regionally. The headline conveys institutional authority and local governance concisely, stressing the newspaper's focus on community affairs. The noun *crackdown* is a nominalisation, derived from the verb phrase "to crack down", which abstracts the act of law enforcement into a concise and formal term. Meanwhile, *Trafford Centre* situates the story geographically, locating it in a specific local context. The headline combines institutional authority with a focus on community governance, conveying the enforcement activity efficiently while emphasising the newspaper's attention to local affairs.

In Lithuanian headlines, nominalisation similarly compresses complex events and emphasises local institutions or cultural processes:

- (10) *Šventosios uosto atstatymas: 36 milijonų eurų investicija į pajūrio ateitį* 'Reconstruction of Šventoji Port: a €36 million investment in the coastal region's future' (Vakarų ekspresas, 04/02/26)

The nouns *atstatymas* 'reconstruction' and *investicija* 'investment' function as nominalisations, condensing complex economic, administrative, and political processes into concise terms. This abstraction allows the headline to present large-scale infrastructural and financial activity in a compact, authoritative form. By foregrounding *Šventosios uostas* and specifying the *36 milijonų eurų* investment, the headline situates local development within a strategic regional framework, emphasising Klaipėda's role in coastal planning.

The nominalised structure frames the reconstruction and investment as deliberate, forward-looking initiatives, linking concrete infrastructure projects to a broader vision for the area's economic and social future.

- (11) *Reikšmingas Uosto direkcijos laivyno atnaujinimas: naujų laivų statybos – finišo tiesėje* 'Significant renewal of the Port Authority fleet: construction of new vessels nearing completion' (*Vakarų ekspresas*, 09/01/26)

The nominalised forms *atnaujinimas* 'renewal' and *statybos* 'construction' condense complex, multi-stage processes into formal expressions, foregrounding institutional agency over individual actions. *Atnaujinimas* frames the port authority's fleet modernisation as a coherent, strategic project, while *statybos* abstracts shipbuilding, emphasising scale and coordination. Together, they construct a narrative of structured, forward-looking governance, linking Klaipėda's port development to regional economic identity and strategic planning, and conveying institutional competence and progress in a concise and authoritative journalistic style.

The analysis of structural features reveals language-specific tendencies. English headlines rely more strongly on syntactic compression and institutional nominalisation, constructing the region through governance, infrastructure, and civic authority. Lithuanian headlines, in contrast, place greater emphasis on communal participation, symbolic places, and culturally embedded events, framing the region as a shared social and cultural space. Thus, regional identity emerges not as a neutral reflection of locality, but as a discursively shaped representation produced through selective linguistic and stylistic choices.

Stylistic Features of Regional Newspaper Headlines in English and Lithuanian

In addition to structural devices like ellipsis and nominalisation, newspaper headlines employ stylistic devices – metaphor, wordplay, allusion, and evaluative or emotive language – to engage readers and construct a sense of place. These devices not only enhance readability and appeal but also reinforce regional identity by highlighting local landmarks, actors, traditions, and cultural values.

Metaphors describe one concept in terms of another, framing events in symbolic or figurative ways. In headlines, they often emphasise local issues or cultural significance. For instance:

- (12) *'Looming' planned tower block would 'dwarf' historic Manchester pub The Marble Arch, say angry owners* (*Manchester Evening News*, 14/03/26)

The metaphors *looming* and *dwarf* frame the planned tower block as both physically and symbolically overwhelming, conveying a sense of threat to the historic pub. By placing *The Marble Arch* at the centre, the headline foregrounds a familiar local landmark, emphasising the community's cultural and emotional attachment. Together, these metaphors dramatise the tension between modern development and heritage preservation, portraying urban expansion as intrusive while highlighting the pub's symbolic significance within the local landscape. Consider another example:

- (13) *Manchester's new Sky High Afternoon Tea is a love letter to the city – with Betty's hot pot and Vimto jam* (Manchester Evening News, 03/13/26)

The metaphor *a love letter to the city* frames the afternoon tea as a symbolic sign of affection and pride towards Manchester. By comparing the food experience to a love letter, the headline elevates it from a simple meal to an expression of care and cultural appreciation. The inclusion of local elements like *Betty's hot pot* and *Vimto jam* grounds the metaphor in Manchester's culinary identity, reinforcing the sense of place and tradition.

Metaphorical expressions are commonly used in headlines to dramatise events and make them more vivid for readers. For instance, in the headline:

- (14) *'It's like a spaceship has landed': The shopfront causing a stir in Manchester's Northern Quarter* (Manchester Evening News, 13/03/26)

The metaphor *a spaceship has landed* frames the *shopfront* as visually extraordinary and futuristic, emphasising its unconventional design. By comparing the building to a spacecraft, the headline dramatises its impact on the urban environment, making the appearance seem surprising and attention-grabbing. Situating this description in *Manchester's Northern Quarter* grounds the metaphor locally, highlighting the community's engagement with unusual architecture and reinforcing the shopfront's cultural and spatial significance. Similarly, in the headline below:

- (15) *People think we're a joke, but in Oldham we're local heroes* (Manchester Evening News, 15/03/26)

The metaphor *we're local heroes* frames the subjects as admirable and respected figures within their community, despite being underestimated or ridiculed by outsiders. By contrasting *a joke* with *local heroes*, the headline dramatises the disparity between external perception and internal reality, emphasising resilience, pride, and social value. Situating the metaphor in *Oldham* places it geographically, highlighting local identity and community loyalty. The figurative language transforms ordinary people or groups into heroic figures, reinforcing the emotional and cultural significance of their contributions within the town.

Metaphors are also employed in Lithuanian newspaper headlines. For example:

- (16) „Šiaulių vorai“ nesustoja pinti viltį 'The 'Šiauliai Spiders' continue to weave hope' (Šiaulių kraštas, 24/02/26)

The metaphor *pinti viltį* 'weave hope' frames the actions of *Šiaulių vorai* (the name of an organization 'Šiauliai Spiders') as deliberate and constructive, transforming the abstract concept of hope into a tangible, labour-like process. This metaphor links local community efforts to a broader sense of regional identity, portraying civic engagement as purposeful, creative, and culturally meaningful work, and emphasising the group's role in fostering optimism within the community. Consider another example:

- (17) *Klaipėdos šviesų festivalis tirpdyt žiemos ledus* 'The Klaipėda Light Festival will colourfully melt the winter ice' (Vakarų ekspresas, 28/01/26)

The metaphor *tirpdyš žiemos ledus* ‘melt the winter ice’ figuratively conveys the exciting effect of the Klaipėda Lights Festival. By comparing the festival’s impact on the thawing of ice, the headline emphasises renewal and social warmth, linking the cultural event to the seasonal context and the activation of public space. This metaphor positions the festival as a symbolic force, highlighting its role in revitalising the city’s winter atmosphere and fostering communal engagement. A similar pattern appears in the headline:

- (18) „*Su jūra – mes didesni*“: *nauja olimpiada kviečia atrasti Lietuvos jūrinę tapatybę* “‘With the sea – we are greater’: a new Olympiad invites the discovery of Lithuania’s maritime identity’ (*Vakarų ekspresas*, 25/02/26)

The metaphor *Su jūra – mes didesni* ‘With the sea – we are greater’ frames the relationship between Lithuania and the sea as empowering and identity-defining. By equating the connection to the sea with being “greater,” the headline dramatises the impact of maritime heritage on national pride and cultural self-perception. The figurative language elevates the *olimpiada* from a simple competition or event to a symbolic exploration of *Lietuvos jūrinę tapatybę* ‘Lithuania’s maritime identity’, emphasising emotional and cultural impact. Situating this metaphor within the context of a national event encourages readers to see the sea as a unifying force, linking heritage, education, and identity in a symbolic way, as in similar way:

- (19) *Palanga prakvipo stinta: eilės žmonių skuba paragauti šventės karalienės* ‘Palanga is filled with the smell of smelt: crowds rush to taste the queen of the festival’ (*Vakarų ekspresas*, 07/02/26)

The metaphor *šventės karalienė* ‘the queen of the festival’ frames the *stinta* ‘smelt fish’ as a central, almost regal figure of the event, elevating it beyond a simple culinary item to a symbol of celebration and cultural importance. By personifying the fish as a “queen,” the headline reveals its significance, suggesting it commands attention, admiration, and excitement from festival-goers. The imagery of *Palanga prakvipo stinta* ‘Palanga smelled of smelt’ further enhances the sensory appeal, creating a vivid scene that engages both smell and anticipation. Together, these figurative elements emphasise the festival’s festive atmosphere, the communal enthusiasm around local tradition, and the symbolic status of the *stinta* within Palanga’s cultural identity.

Wordplay employs linguistic creativity to make headlines engaging, often relying on puns that reinforce regional culture and local familiarity. Consider:

- (20) *A pint with Phil Mealey: Behind the bar and beyond Early Doors* (*Manchester Evening News*, 15/03/26)

The phrase *Behind the bar* functions as a double-entendre, referencing both the literal pub setting and the TV series *Early Doors*. This wordplay situates the story within Manchester’s pub culture, invoking local familiarity and nostalgia, while simultaneously signalling insider access to the social and cultural world depicted in the show. By combining literal and cultural references, the headline engages readers with humour and local touch, reinforcing communal identity and shared knowledge of the city’s pub scene.

(21) *Romanai ir romansai susitiko vienoje scenoje* ‘Novels and romances met on one stage’ (*Šiaulių kraštas*, 19/02/26)

The headline employs wordplay by pairing the similar-sounding words *romanai* ‘novels’ and *romansai* ‘romances’. This phonetic play draws attention to the cultural event, highlighting the meeting of literary and musical forms, while engaging readers through linguistic creativity and playful sound patterns. The alliterative and homophonic effect reinforces the headline’s memorability and emphasises the intersection of artistic genres, making the headline both informative and stylistically appealing.

Allusions invoke well-known cultural, historical, or literary figures or events, situating local stories within broader social and cultural narratives:

(22) *The real-world ‘Sons of Anarchy’ biker war played out on the streets of Greater Manchester* (*Manchester Evening News*, 06/03/26)

The headline’s reference to ‘Sons of Anarchy’ functions as an allusion to the popular TV series about outlaw motorcycle gangs, framing the real-life biker conflict in Greater Manchester through a familiar cultural perspective. This allusion reveals the events, emphasising their intensity and lawlessness, while providing readers with a shared cultural context that enhances understanding and engagement. By linking local crime to a widely recognised narrative, the headline situates the story within broader media and cultural frameworks, amplifying its impact and resonance. Consider another example:

(23) *Coronation Street’s Vicky Myers says ‘I adore her’ as co-star’s news announced* (*Manchester Evening News*, 03/13/26)

This headline contains an allusion to the long-running TV show ‘Coronation Street.’ By referencing the show, the headline situates the story within a familiar cultural and media context, showing to readers the significance of the characters and relationships involved. The allusion allows the audience to immediately understand the social dynamics and emotional weight of the quote *I adore her*, without additional explanation. This connection to a widely recognised cultural text enhances engagement, drawing on readers’ prior knowledge of the show to give the statement more meaning and relevance. The headline thus relies on cultural literacy to convey both context and emotional impact efficiently. Consider the examples in Lithuanian:

(24) *Kuršėnuose pristatyta kelionė per M. K. Čiurliono simbolių pasaulį* ‘In Kuršėnai, a journey through M. K. Čiurlionis’ world of symbols was presented’ (*Šiaulių kraštas*, 09/01/26)

The reference to Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, a prominent Lithuanian painter and composer, functions as an allusion that situates an artistic installation near the Kuršėnai Culture Centre within the nation’s broader artistic and cultural heritage. Inspired by Čiurlionis’ works, the installation offers a subtle interpretation of motifs found in his paintings. By invoking his symbolic and innovative work, the headline frames the event as culturally significant, connecting local activity to a shared national identity and emphasising the intellectual and historical weight of the artistic experience.

- (25) *Karalienės Luizės šleifas Klaipėdoje* ‘Queen Louise’s legacy in Klaipėda’ (*Vakarų ekspresas*, 15/03/26)

The reference to Queen Louise functions as an allusion, linking the local event in Klaipėda to broader historical and cultural narratives. By invoking her name, the headline situates the story within a context of historical memory and European heritage, revealing symbolic meaning to the event. This allusion emphasises tradition and cultural effect, framing the local occurrence as part of a larger historical and symbolic framework.

Evaluative language conveys judgments about events or people, while emotive language highlights emotional significance, engaging readers’ feelings and regional pride. For example:

- (26) *The Manchester beer just named the world’s best – and its recipe hasn’t changed in nearly 180 years* (*Manchester Evening News*, 13/03/26)

The phrase *world’s best* functions as evaluative language, praising the Manchester beer and highlighting its exceptional quality. This assessment not only celebrates local craftsmanship and tradition but also promotes regional pride by positioning Manchester as a centre of enduring expertise and cultural heritage. Combined with the historical fact that the recipe *hasn’t changed in nearly 180 years*, the headline evokes both respect and admiration, engaging readers’ emotions and reinforcing a sense of local identity and continuity. Consider another example:

- (27) *Tokią parodą Joniškyje galima pamatyti tik kartą gyvenime* ‘An exhibition like this in Joniškis can be seen only once in a lifetime’ (*Šiaulių kraštas*, 06/03/26)

The phrase *tik kartą gyvenime* ‘only once in a lifetime’ functions as emotive and evaluative language, emphasising the uniqueness and exceptional nature of the exhibition on display at the White Synagogue in Joniškis. Along the perimeter of the synagogue, 32 glass spheres mounted on “stands” are arranged. By looking through a powerful microscope, visitors enter a world of fairy tales and fantasy, where miniature artworks are revealed – microminiatures by the world-renowned Ukrainian artist Volodymyr Kazarian, titled “The Eighth Wonder of the World.” By framing the event as a rare, unrepeatable opportunity, the headline engages readers’ emotions, creating excitement and urgency, while also highlighting the cultural significance of the exhibition. Similar in:

- (28) *Palangoje dūžta ledo luitai ir jūra kuria šerbetą: vaizdas – kerintis* ‘In Palanga, ice blocks are breaking apart and the sea is creating sorbet: the view is enchanting’ (*Vakarų ekspresas*, 20/02/26)

The adjective *kerintis* ‘enchanting’ functions as emotive language, highlighting the aesthetic impact of the scene described. The winter of 2026 on the coast created rare, almost magical scenes: impressive ice sculptures, while the wind-driven waters of the Baltic Sea formed a view resembling sorbet. Well-known Palanga photographer Aldas Kazlauskas has shared a striking video in which this coastal beauty is revealed right by the Palanga Bridge. By emphasising the beauty of Palanga’s coast and the interplay between ice floes and the sea, the headline engages readers’ senses and emotions, fostering appreciation for the natural environment. This evaluative framing links local landscapes to regional

identity, celebrating Palanga’s distinctive coastal charm and reinforcing community pride in its natural heritage.

Overall, the analysis shows that stylistic devices in regional newspaper headlines function not only as attention-grabbing techniques but also as discursive tools for constructing regional identity. Through metaphor, wordplay, allusion, and evaluative language, both English and Lithuanian headlines transform local places, events, and actors into culturally meaningful symbols, reinforcing local pride, shared memory, and community belonging. The comparison also reveals language-specific tendencies. English headlines more often employ dramatic metaphors, popular culture references, and strong evaluative framing, presenting the region as dynamic and media-oriented. Lithuanian headlines rely more strongly on cultural symbolism, historical allusions, and emotionally embedded metaphors, constructing the region as a space of cultural continuity and communal identity.

The table below presents a comparative overview of the frequency of key linguistic and rhetorical features identified in the English- and Lithuanian-language headline corpora:

Table 1.
Frequency of structural and stylistic features in English and Lithuanian newspaper headlines

Linguistic feature	English corpus (n=150)	Lithuanian corpus (n=150)
Ellipsis	96	74
Evaluative/emotive vocabulary	71	68
Metaphor	43	39
Nominalisation	38	31
Wordplay	19	17
Allusion/intertextual reference	14	21

Note: The identified features are not mutually exclusive, as individual headlines may exhibit multiple structural and stylistic devices. Accordingly, the frequencies represent occurrences of each feature within the corpus, rather than a cumulative total.

The findings show that both English and Lithuanian newspaper headlines rely primarily on ellipsis and syntactic compression, particularly in the English corpus, while evaluative language and metaphor occur with broadly similar frequency in both corpora, contributing to the construction of regional identity. Lithuanian headlines more often employ allusions and intertextual references, whereas English headlines show a stronger tendency toward structural compression and nominalisation. Across both languages, these stylistic strategies – metaphor, wordplay, allusion, and evaluative/emotive language – function to foreground local places, actors, and events, thereby constructing regional identity as meaningful, culturally embedded, and discursively shaped.

Contribution and Practical Relevance of the Research

Previous studies of newspaper headlines have primarily focused on structural compression, sensationalism, evaluative language, and political media discourse in national and international journalism, with recent research increasingly addressing genre variation and pragmatic interpretation (Scott, 2023; Borchmann, 2024; Shaker, 2025). In contrast, the present study demonstrates that regional newspaper headlines perform not only informative and attention-grabbing functions but also an important identity-building role. The analysis revealed that regional headlines systematically foreground local places, institutions, communities, and culturally recognisable references, thereby contributing to the discursive construction of regional identity.

The comparative analysis further demonstrates that Lithuanian and English regional headlines employ partly different strategies for constructing regional identity. English headlines more frequently rely on syntactic compression, evaluative language, and dramatising metaphorical expressions, whereas Lithuanian headlines more often foreground locality through explicit place references, culturally specific allusions, and community-oriented framing. These differences suggest that regional identity is shaped not only by journalistic conventions but also by broader linguistic and cultural traditions.

The study contributes to previous research on media discourse and regional identity by demonstrating how highly compressed headline structures participate in the symbolic representation of local belonging and regional distinctiveness. The findings also extend existing headline studies by showing that structural and stylistic features such as ellipsis, nominalisation, metaphor, wordplay, and evaluative/emotive vocabulary perform not merely rhetorical but also identity-constructing functions within regional journalism.

The study has practical relevance for media linguistics, discourse analysis, journalism studies, and research on regional communication. The findings may contribute to future comparative studies of regional media discourse, headline language, and identity construction in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

Conclusion

This study investigated the linguistic construction of regional identity in English and Lithuanian regional newspaper headlines through a comparative discourse-analytical approach. By analysing headlines from *Manchester Evening News*, *Liverpool Echo*, *Šiaulių kraštas*, and *Vakarų ekspresas*, the research demonstrated that headlines function not merely as condensed summaries of news events but also as discursive mechanisms through which regional realities, communities, and identities are symbolically represented.

The findings of the study generally support the proposed hypothesis. The analysis revealed that both English and Lithuanian headlines rely heavily on structural compression (ellipsis and nominalisation), confirming observations made in previous headline studies concerning the informational density and economy of headline language. At the same time, the comparative perspective demonstrated that these linguistic strategies are

shaped by language-specific grammatical and stylistic conventions. English headlines more frequently employ strong evaluative vocabulary, dramatic metaphorical framing, and highly compressed syntactic structures, whereas Lithuanian headlines tend to foreground locality and community-oriented representation through explicit references to regional places, institutions, and culturally familiar expressions.

The findings contribute to previous research on headline discourse by demonstrating that structural and stylistic headline features perform not only informative and persuasive functions but also important identity-constructing functions within regional media discourse. In contrast to broader studies of headline language, the present analysis highlights the particular role of regional newspapers in reinforcing local belonging and symbolic regional distinctiveness through recurrent references to places, communities, and local cultural contexts.

Nevertheless, the study has several limitations. The analysis was based on a relatively limited corpus of headlines collected over a three-month period and focused only on four regional newspapers. In addition, although the research incorporated elements of quantitative observation, the primary analytical approach remained qualitative and interpretative. Future research could, therefore, expand the corpus, include a larger number of regional newspapers from different countries, and combine discourse analysis with more systematic quantitative or corpus-linguistic methods. Further studies could also examine audience reception and investigate how readers interpret and respond to linguistic representations of regional identity in media discourse.

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