Research Paper

Dissecting Linguistic Devices in Khasi Newspaper Headlines: A Semantic and Lexico-Grammatical Analysis

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Abstract

This paper offers a comprehensive linguistic analysis of 80 Khasi newspaper headlines collected from six prominent newspapers across diverse thematic areas, including politics, administration, environment, sports, and culture, during May to July 2025. Utilizing Montgomery's (2007) model, the study investigates both semantic and lexico-grammatical features to reveal how Khasi journalistic language skillfully balances brevity, clarity, and cultural nuance. The semantic analysis centers on the triadic elements of persons, events, and circumstances, uncovering a strong emphasis on event-driven constructions with frequent explicit references to agents such as government bodies, community groups, and key individuals. In contrast, circumstantial information, such as time and place, is comparatively sparse, often omitted to maintain headline economy and stimulate active reader participation through a culturally embedded notion of "tactical incompleteness." Lexico-grammatical examination demonstrates widespread use of ellipsis and syntactic compression, where auxiliary verbs and agents are left out when contextually inferable, alongside prevalent nominalization that encapsulates complex processes and evaluations into compact noun forms, enhancing informational density. The analysis also finds frequent employment of non-finite verb constructions to express purpose or intent, while the crucial role of classifiers in Khasi grammar ensures precise clarity concerning number, gender, and animacy. Strategic use of tense and aspect markers provides temporal nuances, and selective code-mixing with English, mainly for technical terminology and proper nouns, reflects a thoughtful negotiation between preserving linguistic identity and embracing modern influences. Collectively, these findings portray Khasi newspaper headlines as sophisticated linguistic artifacts that integrate global journalistic conventions with local grammatical and cultural imperatives, thereby offering important contributions to media linguistics in minority language contexts. This research invites further inquiry into minority language media and highlights the broader applicability of Montgomery's model beyond dominant world languages.

Keywords: Headlines, Linguistics, Khasi, Montgomery, Semantic, Lexico-grammatical.

I.   Introduction
1.1 Headlines: Definitions, History, and Functions

In the modern media landscape, the newspaper headline holds a distinctive and powerful position. It is the initial point of interaction between the news and the reader, a carefully crafted fragment of text charged not only with summarizing content but also with persuading, engaging, and shaping a reader's attitude toward the story that follows. Bell (1991) defines a headline as a "short summary or condensation of the news story, meant to be read before the story and to attract the reader's attention," capturing the twin objectives of brevity and allure. Caple and Bednarek (2016) further elucidate headlines as "semi-autonomous textual units" that prioritize salience and immediacy, maximizing communicative economy while invoking curiosity. Reah (2002) adds that a headline functions as a bridge between the reader and the article, embodying the strategic intent of both the journalist and the news institution. Collectively, these perspectives emphasize the headline's role as a communicative device designed not merely to present information but also to involve the reader actively in the construction of meaning.

Newspaper headlines occupy a pivotal role in journalistic communication, serving as the primary gateway between the news text and its audience. They are a unique linguistic phenomenon, embodying a careful blend of brevity, clarity, and persuasion. As Crystal (2003:85) notes, there exists a "common core" of linguistic features shared by all varieties and dialects of a language, encompassing fundamental word order, word formation, and core vocabulary. However, journalistic language including headlines often diverges from this common core by adopting specialized structures and stylistic devices to meet its communicative demands.

Headlines function simultaneously as concise summaries and persuasive texts. Van Dijk (1988) characterizes headlines as expressions of the major topic of the news, summarizing the content in a compact form. Bird and Merwin (1955:177) describe them as "miniature replicas" of the full story, designed to highlight key points in short, understandable phrasing. Cotter (2010:26) adds that headlines serve as semiotic signifiers, where the font size and style symbolically denote the newsworthiness of the content. Such linguistic traits imbue headlines with memorable impact.

The importance of headlines transcends simple summarization. Dor (2003:718) underscores that for many readers, headlines are the primary element scanned before deciding to engage deeper with a news article, transforming headlines into powerful tools for shaping public attention and opinion. This function is evidenced by features like bold typography and extended placement on the page to captivate readers' gaze (Bird & Merwin, 1955:178). According to Crystal and Davy (1969:174), headlines must deliver a clear, succinct, and intriguing message to arrest the eye of the average reader whose browsing behavior is swift and selective.

However, the traditional assumption that headlines straightforwardly summarize stories has faced criticism. Dor (2003:697-698) identifies three challenges: some headlines highlight only a single story detail or direct quotations, some contain riddles especially in tabloids, and crucially, headlines carry pragmatic functions beyond just conveying facts. Mirabela and Ariana (2010:187) articulate that headlines leverage linguistic methods to exploit readers' interpretive capabilities, enhancing the headline's persuasive and emotional effect.

Halliday (1985:372) conceptualizes headlines as "little texts" with their own specialized grammar or "block language" (Mathews, 2007:42). This abbreviated style is designed for optimal informational density and urgency. Moreover, Mallette (1990, cited in Bedrichova, 2006:14) identifies four basic headline functions: to summarize news, grade story importance, enhance page design clarity, and persuade the viewer to become a reader.

With the emergence of digital media, headlines have become even more critical. Shevtsova (2019) observes how newspapers and magazines abandon their paper life for digital existence, altering functional and pragmatic uses of headlines. Herman and Chomsky (2002) argue that headlines are carefully crafted to manipulate, maintain readership, and convey ideologies, emphasizing the strategic linguistic decisions behind headline writing.

In sum, headlines are more than brief titles; they are dynamic communicative acts balancing information, persuasion, cultural attitudes, and commercial imperatives, which makes their linguistic study a key to understanding media discourse.

The genre of headlines shares common global features but also adapts distinctively to local linguistic and cultural milieus. Their core functions such as informing, indicating editorial stance, and attracting attention intertwine fluidly to meet both journalistic and social goals. Thus, exploring headlines in an indigenous language such as Khasi, where long-standing oral traditions and modern media intersect, promises deep insights into how language mediates culture and identity within contemporary journalistic practice.

1.2 Introduction to the Khasi Language

Khasi is an indigenous language of India, primarily spoken in the state of Meghalaya and adjoining areas, by approximately 1.5 million people. It is a vibrant and historically rich member of the Austroasiatic language family, specifically the Mon-Khmer branch, distinguishing it from the Indo-Aryan, Dravidian and Tibeto-Burman languages predominant in the Indian subcontinent. This classification links Khasi with languages of Southeast Asia rather than those of mainland India, contributing to its distinctive phonological and grammatical features.

Phonologically, Khasi is noted for its rich vowel system and tonal distinctions that contribute to its unique rhythmic and melodic qualities. Morphologically, Khasi displays a mixture of analytic and agglutinative tendencies, employing classifiers such as *ka* (feminine singular), *u* (masculine singular), and *ki* (plural), along with a range of affixes that mark grammatical relations and gender (Dkhar, 2024).

Syntactically, Khasi typically follows a subject-verb-object (SVO) order but shows flexibility, especially in topicalization and relative clause constructions commonly utilized in newspaper headlines to foreground information. Its lexicon carries a blend of indigenous Austroasiatic roots enriched by borrowings from English reflecting colonial history and ongoing globalization especially evident in media, education, and technology domains.

Sociolinguistically, Khasi enjoys formal recognition in Meghalaya, serving as a medium in education, administration, and, importantly, media. The Khasi society is culturally distinctive due to its matrilineal

structure, influencing kinship terms and forms of politeness embedded in the language. Khasi newspapers, radio, and increasingly digital media serve as vital vehicles for language maintenance, education, and cultural affirmation. Despite pressures from dominant languages like English, Khasi media continues to innovate, blending traditional linguistic forms with modern communicative demands.

Because headlines embody concentrated language use, they provide an ideal window into Khasi's adaptability and resilience. Studying Khasi headlines thus offers profound insights into how the language negotiates identity, modernity, and media discourse.

1.3 Montgomery's (2007) Model of Headline Analysis
A compelling framework for understanding newspaper headlines lies in Montgomery's (2007) two-pronged model, which has gained prominence across headline research (Hadidi et al., 2021). Montgomery's approach posits that a rigorous analysis must address both:
● **Semantic Analysis:** The extraction of the basic elements of meaning such as *Persons* (who?), *Events* (what happened?), and *Circumstances* (when/where/how?).

● **Lexico-Grammatical Analysis:** The unpacking of language-level devices such as full sentential form, compression/ellipsis, nominalization, classifiers, non-finite clauses, compounding, and code-mixing.

In this particular research work, Khasi newspaper headlines will be analysed using this model. This model is particularly suited for Khasi, where headlines harness both indigenous and borrowed features, demanding an integrative and nuanced analytic approach. Montgomery's framework facilitates both quantitative (e.g., frequency of ellipsis, types of agency) and qualitative (e.g., rhetorical or cultural strategies) investigation unveiling how linguistic choice, cultural expression, and journalistic practice converge in headline construction.

II.   Literature Review
Extensive research over the past decades has invested in decoding the linguistic architecture and communicative functions of newspaper headlines across languages and contexts. The consensus among scholars is that headlines constitute a unique discursive genre, marked by formal constraints and strategic communicative goals that distinguish them from ordinary prose or conversational speech.

Early foundational work by Bell (1991) set the stage by defining headlines as concise, attention-focused linguistic units that precede news stories. Building upon this, Reah (2002) emphasized their bridging role, where headlines condense the essence of the news while simultaneously calibrating the audience's expectations and engagement. More recent studies underscore the dual semantic-pragmatic nature of headlines. Van Dijk (1988) identified headlines as framing devices that do not just present events neutrally but actively shape interpretation by selecting and highlighting particular aspects of a story. Richardson (2007) described headlines as a "miniature genre," replete with telegraphic style and specialized syntactic phenomena, carefully curated to fit the commercial and communicative imperatives of the press.

Montgomery's (2007) contribution is widely regarded as one of the most integrative analytic frameworks, as it couples semantic dissection with lexico-grammatical scrutiny. His notion of "tactical incompleteness" captures how headlines strategically omit linguistic elements (such as articles, auxiliaries, or agents) and blur contextual details to maintain reader interest, prompting follow-up reading. This linguistic economy does not dilute meaning but rather encodes it densely, anticipating the interplay of headline and full text.

Subsequent empirical studies have documented recurring headline strategies, including ellipsis (the deliberate omission of predictable grammatical elements) and nominalization (transforming verbs or adjectives into nouns to condense information). Bonyadi and Samuel's (2013) contrastive work showed these were cross-linguistic tendencies, though their specific realization varied by language and culture. Chovanec (2014), for example, demonstrated that unlike the prevalent present tense in English headlines to convey immediacy, Czech and French press use a wider range of tenses reflecting narrative styles shaped by different journalistic traditions.

Hadidi, Taghiyev, and Ahmadova (2022) applied Montgomery's model to 50 political headlines from major American newspapers, revealing that a large majority employed both full sentence structures and tactical ellipsis. Their findings reinforced the view that modern headlines skillfully balance informativeness with incompleteness, inviting readers to engage actively with the text. Their quantitative charts and qualitative examples highlighted cross-newspaper similarities and nuanced differences in headline construction, illuminating the subtle interplay between linguistic form, genre conventions, and ideological positioning.

Salih & Abdulla (2012) offers a concise and insightful analysis of the distinctive linguistic features that set newspaper headlines apart from ordinary language. Focusing on morphology, semantics, and syntax, the study finds that headlines are driven by space constraints and a need for immediacy, which leads to unique characteristics such as frequent use of abbreviations, special attention-grabbing vocabulary, and intentional

ambiguity to spark reader curiosity. Statement-type headlines emerge as the most common due to their efficiency in conveying the essence of a story in limited space. The authors argue that these specialized linguistic and structural features are deliberately manipulated to summarize news succinctly and persuade readers to engage further with the article, thus underscoring the functional and strategic significance of headline language in journalism.

While headline linguistics is richly developed for global languages such as English, French, and Czech, there remains a research gap in indigenous and minority languages, especially in South Asian contexts. Khasi, with its unique linguistic profile and sociocultural significance, represents fertile ground for such inquiry. Previous sociolinguistic work (Dkhar, 2024; Dutta, 2016) has explored language vitality and code-switching in Khasi media but has generally not penetrated deeply into headline grammars and discourse strategies.

This study contributes to filling that lacuna by examining Khasi headlines through the lens of Montgomery's (2007) model, thus providing both a structural mapping of linguistic devices and a cultural reading of how Khasi newspapers negotiate the demands of modern journalism while maintaining linguistic distinctiveness. In doing so, it expands the comparative literature on headline studies and furthers understanding of how media discourse functions in linguistically and culturally complex minority settings.

III.   Methodology

3.1 Research Design
This study adopts a quantitative research design to analyze the linguistic features of Khasi newspaper headlines. A quantitative approach is appropriate since the objective is to systematically classify and count linguistic devices and structural patterns across a defined corpus, enabling statistical representation and comparative analysis across different newspaper sources. The study combines descriptive statistics with qualitative contextualization to ensure results are both measurable and meaningful.

3.2 Research Objectives
The study is guided by the following objectives:
● 	To identify and classify the main linguistic devices and construction strategies used in Khasi-language newspaper headlines.

● 	To analyze the distribution and frequency of semantic and lexico-grammatical features within headlines, employing Montgomery's (2007) analytic model.

● 	To interpret the cultural and communicative significance of headline strategies within the broader context of Khasi media and society.

3.3 Research Questions
The research addresses these key questions:
1. 	What are the dominant linguistic devices and discourse strategies employed in Khasi newspaper headlines, as classified by Montgomery's (2007) framework?

2. 	How are semantic elements (persons, events, circumstances) and lexico-grammatical features (such as ellipsis, nominalization, compounding, and code-mixing) distributed across headlines from the sampled newspapers?

3.4 Data Collection
Headlines were collected exclusively from secondary sources accessible in the public domain. The corpus comprises 80 headlines, sampled from six prominent Khasi news outlets that represent diverse readerships and spheres of influence across Meghalaya. All headlines were gathered from their respective platforms, predominantly e-papers and online channels, to ensure authenticity and verifiability.
Sampling Structure: The distribution of headlines among the newspapers is as given: 20 headlines are from Mawphor, 12 from Nongsain Hima, 12 from Peitngor, 12 from Rupang, 12 from T7 and 12 from Batesi TV. This balanced sample was designed to reflect both legacy and newer media voices in Khasi journalism.
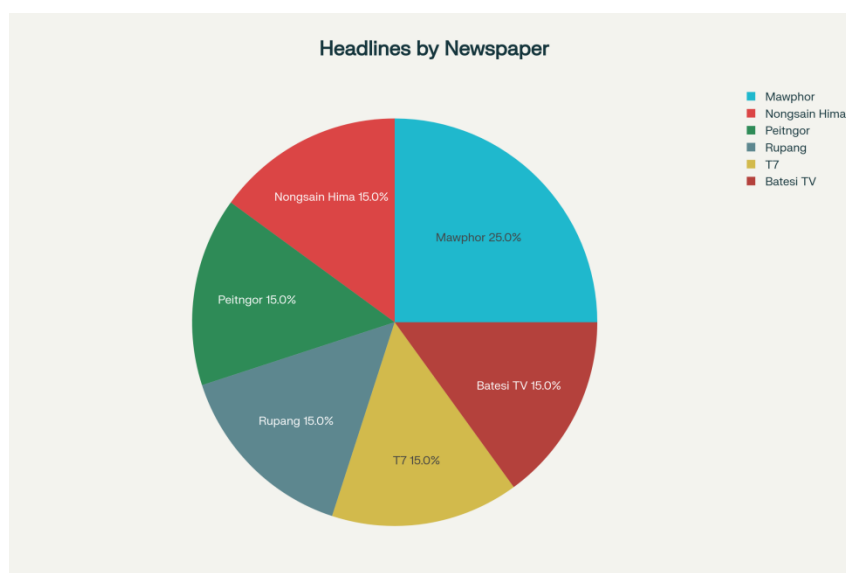A visual depiction of this distribution is presented below.

Figure 1: Distribution of Khasi newspaper headlines from six different newspapers

3.5 Brief Profiles of Source Newspapers

Mawphor

Established on 1st July 1989, Mawphor holds the distinction of being the first Khasi daily newspaper. It started as a four-page tabloid with an initial print run of 1,000 copies and has since grown dramatically in status and reach. Known for its broad coverage and in-depth reporting, Mawphor has become a household name, serving as a primary source of news and cultural commentary for Khasi speakers across the region. Its long history makes it both an institution and a benchmark for Khasi-language journalism[1].

Nongsain Hima

First published on 6 December 1960, Nongsain Hima is one of the oldest Khasi-language newspapers still in circulation. Based in Shillong, it has built a reputation for providing comprehensive coverage of both local and national news and is well-respected for its focus on community issues, editorial independence, and consistent engagement with social and political developments[2].

Peitngor

U Peitngor is a daily news outlet that covers a wide spectrum of topics, from politics and governance to sports, entertainment, and national affairs. The newspaper's digital-first approach has enabled it to reach readers beyond traditional print boundaries. It is known for its accessible reporting style and is headquartered on Jaiaw Main Road, Shillong, under the stewardship of A. L. Lapang[3].

Rupang

Rupang is another key Khasi-language newspaper, published daily from Meghalaya and particularly influential in the East Khasi Hills area. It is regarded as a major source for regional updates, community stories, and cultural insights, playing a crucial role in local news dissemination[4].

T7

T7 is a dynamic media house and news channel based in Shillong, active both on television and digital platforms. It specializes in real-time news updates, offering content that appeals to younger and digitally-savvy audiences. T7's coverage is broad and fast-moving, reflecting trends in modern news consumption and the growing impact of online journalism in the Khasi community[5].

Batesi TV

Batesi TV is widely recognized as a local news and entertainment channel, frequently cited for its coverage of grassroots issues and civic affairs. Operating on both broadcast and digital platforms such as YouTube, Batesi TV bridges traditional reporting and new media, making Khasi news accessible to a broad audience and adding a unique voice to regional reportage[6].

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[1] https://mawphor.com.siteindices.com/

[2] https://www.bookadsnow.com/newspaper/u-nongsain-hima

[3] https://www.youtube.com/@pcnshillong

[4] https://www.justdial.com/East-Khasi-Hills/Rupang-Daily-Newspaper

[5] https://www.instagram.com/t7news/

[6] https://batesitv.com/

3.6 Thematic Breadth and Timeframe

The selection comprises headlines spanning all major fields: politics, administration, environment, science and technology, sports, entertainment, and more. This inclusive approach ensures that the analysis reflects the full spectrum of public discourse as articulated in Khasi journalism.

All headlines were meticulously gathered from the months of May to July 2025, capturing a dynamic period in the region's news cycle and offering a representative snapshot of contemporary Khasi media language.

3.7 Data Handling and Analytical Procedure

● All headlines were transcribed and catalogued with source attribution and date tags.

● Each headline was then coded for semantic and lexico-grammatical features following Montgomery's (2007) model.

● Patterns and device frequencies were quantified statistically, while illustrative examples were analyzed qualitatively.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Given that the study relies solely on publicly available sources, there are no direct ethical risks. All data is used for scholarly purposes with full acknowledgement of source publications.

IV. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Semantic Analysis of Khasi Headlines

To analyze the structure of meaning within Khasi newspaper headlines, we begin with the foundational triad defined by Montgomery (2007): persons (who?), events (what happened?), and circumstances (when, where, why, how?). This approach not only clarifies the essential communicative work headlines do, but reveals patterns of emphasis, omission, and narrative technique unique to Khasi media discourse.

4.1.1 General Distribution of Semantic Elements

A quantitative survey of the 80-headline corpus shows an overwhelming tendency for headlines to explicitly mention at least one core semantic element, especially events. While all headlines feature a core event, the inclusion of actors (persons) and circumstances is both strategic and variable.

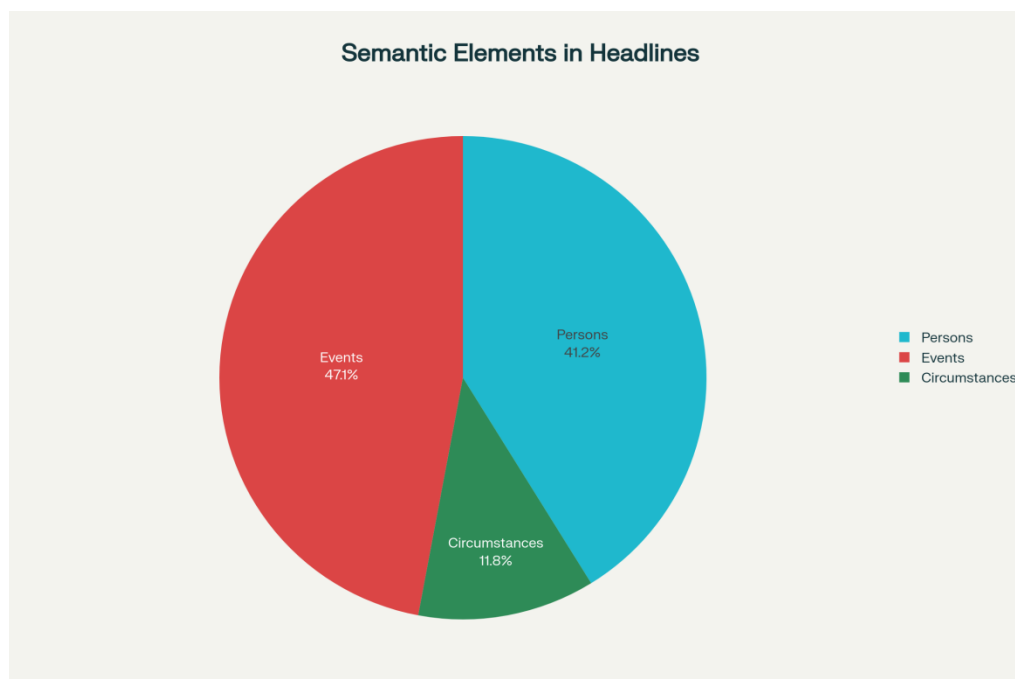This pattern is visualized below.

Figure 2: Distribution of Semantic Elements in Khasi Newspaper Headlines (N=80)

This pie chart demonstrates that while every headline highlights an event (100%), a significant majority foregrounds persons (87.5%), but only a quarter explicitly specify circumstances (25%). This already signals the genre's tendency toward brevity and selectivity, preferring to leave some details for the article body or to reader inference.

4.1.2 The "Persons" Dimension: Agency, Individualization, and Collectivization

Khasi headlines most often cast government, institutions, and collective groups in prominent roles. Individuals, when mentioned, typically serve symbolic or newsworthy functions such as: a high official making a statement, a minister inaugurating a scheme, or a sports celebrity scoring a win. In many examples, the agent remains implicit, putting the spotlight on the event and inviting communal identification or curiosity.
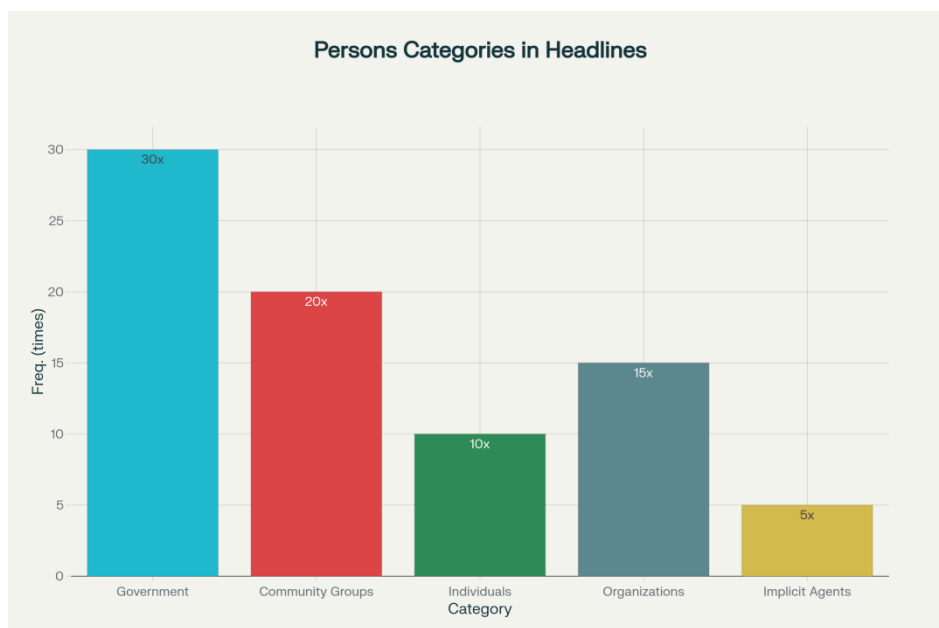

Figure 3: Frequency of Persons Categories in Semantic Analysis of Khasi Headlines (N=80)

This bar chart visualizes the range of "persons" involved. Let us look at the types and offer vivid examples:

i. Government: "*Phaikhmat ka sorkar ban leit rung iing noh ha nongkyndong ban ai injek Covid*" *(Mawphor, February 25, 2022)* ("The government now aims to go to villages for Covid vaccination.") Here, 'ka sorkar' is the leading institutional agent, shaping both the topical salience and framing of public action.

ii. Community Groups: "*Dang duna ki nongrep kiba thung ia u broccoli ha Meghalaya*" *(Mawphor, May 23, 2025)* ("There are still very few farmers who grow broccoli in Meghalaya.") The focus is on 'ki nongrep' (the farmers), broadening agency to occupational groups and establishing relevance to local livelihoods.

iii. Organizations: "*Khur jingjop ka Tongseng Youth, Musniang Rim bad ka Pala SC*" *(Mawphor, July 11, 2025)* ("Tongseng Youth, Musniang Rim, and Pala SC win.") Sports teams or civic organizations become the focal actors, imbuing headlines with communal pride.

iv. Individuals: "*Bthah u CM ia ki MLA ka NPP ban buddien ia ki kam pynroi ha ki constituency jong ki*" *(Mawphor, July 10, 2025)* ("The CM asked the NPP MLAs to follow the development work in their constituencies.") High-profile individuals are highlighted when their speech or actions trigger public consequences.

v. Implicit Agents: Frequently, agency is backgrounded or suppressed for effect: "*La nang kulmar ka ktien Khasi*" *(Mawphor, June 6, 2025)* ("The Khasi language is getting complex.") The passive or impersonal subject moves attention to the process or state, crafting objectivity or universality.

This diversity of *person* reference reflects Khasi social structures: hierarchy and authority, community orientation, and often the deliberate emphasis on collective, rather than individual, agency.

4.1.3 The "Events" Dimension

Events are the unshakable center of headline semantics. Whether describing government initiative, communal achievements, social crises, or routine developments, the event clause of the headline is where meaning is anchored.
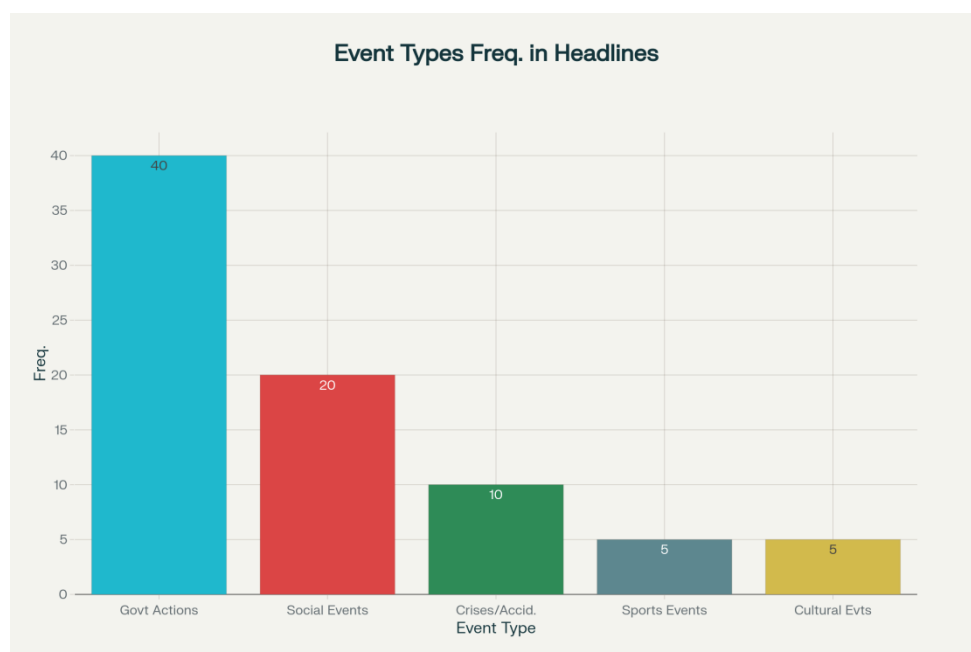
Figure 4: Frequency of Events Categories in Semantic Analysis of Khasi Headlines (N=80)

A closer look at the range of events yields several notable trends:

i. Government Actions (40/80): Policy approvals (*myjur ka sorkar*[7]…The Government agrees..), legal interventions (*rai ka HC*[8]…The HC decides), and administrative responses (*lyngba ka MNREGS ai kam ka sorkar*[9]…The government gives employment through the MNREGS…).

ii. Social Events (20/80): Educational achievements, community festivals, or campaigns (*ioh jingiaroh ka Sohra College kum ka shlem jingkyrmen*[10]*…*).

iii. Crises/Accidents (10/80): Natural calamities, sudden deaths, or crime (*kem ki pulit Assam ia ar ngut ki nongkhaii masi na Meghalaya*[11] "Assam police arrested two cattle traders from Meghalaya.").

iv. Sports and Cultural Events (10/80 combined): Victories, tournaments, celebrations (*Wanpoi ki khusnam jong ka Durand Cup ha Shillong*[12] "The awards of the Durand Cup have arrived in Shillong.").

Edition by edition, the event is usually presented in present tense, conferring a sense of immediacy and relevance, even when describing past incidents. This stylistic choice aligns with global journalistic norms while subtly marking Khasi press identity.

4.1.4 The "Circumstances" Dimension

Circumstance elements in Khasi headlines are often the most compressed or omitted, present only when crucial for clarity or rhetorical focus. When explicitly included, they can indicate time, place, or purpose with remarkable economy.

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[7]Mawphor, July 11, 2025

[8]Mawphor, July 10, 2025

[9]Mawphor, February 25, 2025

[10]Mawphor, July 11, 2025

[11]Mawphor, February 25, 2025
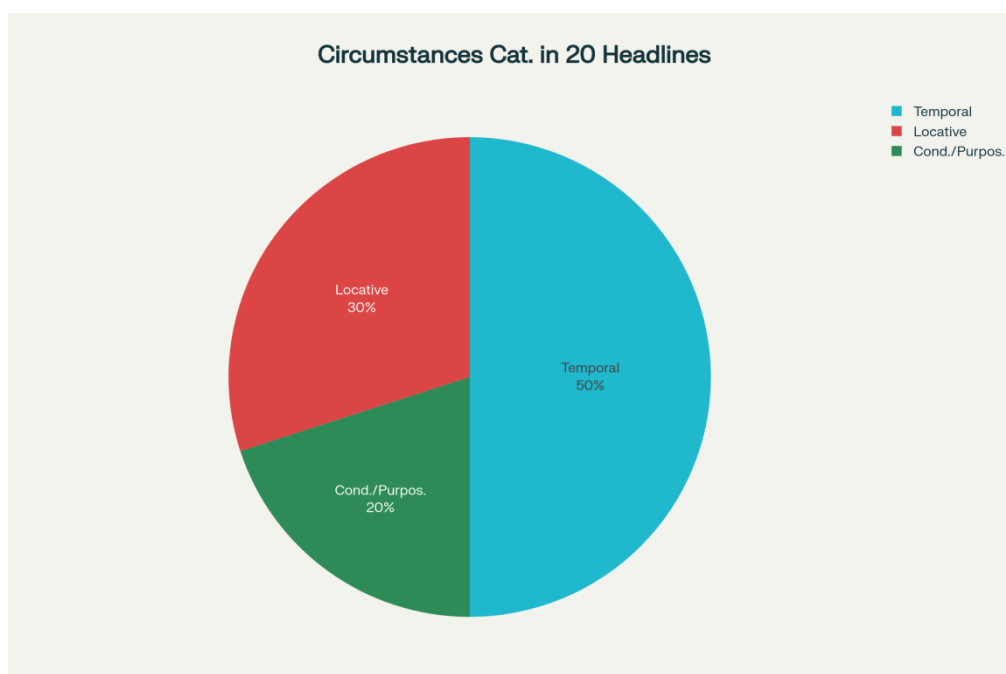
[12]Mawphor, July 10, 2025

Figure 5: Distribution of Circumstances Categories in Khasi Headlines (N=20)

The breakdown here illustrates:

i. Temporal Circumstances: "*shiteng miet leit jngoh kynsan u Dy CM bad ka kurim ia ka Khyndai Lad[13]*" ("At midnight, the Deputy CM and his wife paid a surprise visit to Khyndai Lad.") The timing, "*shiteng miet,*" both foregrounds drama and situational context.

ii. Locative Circumstances: "*Kem ki pulit Assam ia ar ngut ki nongkhaii masi na Meghalaya[14]*" ("Assam police arrested two cattle traders from Meghalaya.") The origin "*na Meghalaya*" specifies geographic relevance.

iii. Conditional/Purposive Circumstances: "*Ban kyntiew ia ka karkhana shna phlim, mynjur ka sorkar ia ka MFTP, 2025[15]*" ("To promote the film industry, the government agreed to the MFTP, 2025.") Here, "*ban kyntiew…*" encodes purpose, setting policy within a clear teleological frame.

Overall, only about one in four headlines makes such circumstances explicit; the rest invite the reader to reconstruct context or to consult the article body.

4.1.5 Explicitness vs. Implicitness

A salient pattern in Khasi headlines is the calculated mix of explicitness and implicitness. Agency and event are overwhelmingly clear but circumstances and even the nature of events may be hinted at rather than overtly described. This achieves two genre goals: dramatic economy and reader engagement.

Illustrative Examples

(1)"Ka pyrthei kylla khongpong, ka pisa ka daw bah jong ka jingpynjot ha ki liang baroh" (Mawphor, May 14, 2025)

Translation: "The world has turned upside down, money is the main cause of destruction in all aspects."

● *Persons:* Abstract ('the world', 'money').

● *Event:* Drastic change, causation asserted.

● *Circumstance:* Contextual 'in all aspects'.

Here, the agent ("ka pisa") is personalized, and the circumstance is broadened with an encompassing phrase, achieving philosophical and local resonance.

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[13]Mawphor, July 10, 2025

[14]Mawphor, February 25, 2025

[15]Mawphor, July 11, 2025

(2) "Khur jingjop ka Tongseng Youth…"(Mawphor, July 11, 2025)
Translation: "Tongseng Youth achieves victory."
● *Persons:* Clearly stated (sports team).

● *Event:* Victory reported.

● *Circumstance:* Sports event context is implicit.

No date, place, or further cause is given; the prestige of the event and actor is assumed known to the audience.

(3) "Nalor kaba ai jinghikai, donkam ruh ki polisi ban pynneh mei mariang" (Mawphor, June 3, 2025)
Translation: "Apart from teaching, there is also a need for policies to conserve nature."
● *Persons:* Policies and educators are focalized.

● *Event:* Need highlighted.

● *Circumstance:* Environmental conservation, given as a contextual necessity.

Through these choices, Khasi headlines do more than report, they choreograph attention, spark inference, and pose silent questions. The preferred focus on event and agent reflects a culture of shared urgency and community centrality, while the sparing use of circumstances keeps the news fresh, ambiguous, and participatory.

4.2 Lexico-Grammatical Analysis of Khasi Headlines

The Khasi newspaper headlines examined in this corpus reveal a highly purposeful use of grammar and form. The lexico-grammatical strategies employed are not merely stylistic flourishes but essential tools allowing journalists to achieve brevity, precision, and punch. In this section, the paper will discuss the most notable structural devices: ellipsis/omission, nominalization, non-finite verb forms, classifier usage, tense and aspect marking, expressiveness in sentence structure, and code-mixing, each illustrated with multiple examples drawn from across the data collected.

4.2.1 Ellipsis and Syntactic Omission

A defining characteristic of Khasi headlines, as in many press traditions, is ellipsis which is the deliberate omission of grammatical elements that would be necessary in standard prose. This omission serves headline economy, immediacy, and sometimes dramatic effect. Examples:

(5) *"Ban kyntiew ia ka karkhana shna phlim, mynjur ka sorkar ia ka MFTP, 2025."* (Mawphor, July 11, 2025)
("To promote the film industry, the government agreed to the MFTP, 2025.")
The initial phrase "Ban kyntiew ia ka karkhana shna phlim" lacks an explicit subject (the government is understood). This ellipsis foregrounds the action and goal, with the agent restored only in the main clause.

(6) Ellipsis of Copula or Verb to Increase Density:
"La nang kulmar ka ktien Khasi." (Mawphor, June 6, 2025)
("The Khasi language is getting complex.")
"La" (perfective), "nang" (continuative), omit a linking verb or auxiliary, compressing the message to core meaning.

(7) *"Shahkem 4 ngut ki nong Africa ha Hyderabad."* (U Nongsaiñ Hima, July 10, 2025)
("Four Africans were detained in Hyderabad.")
No agent is specified (who detained them); the news "happens" to the focus group, typical of crisis or police reports.

(8) *"Pynkynriah kam ka sorkar ia ki ophisar pulit IPS."*(Batesi TV, June 28, 2025)
("The government transfers IPS police officers.")
Direct, nominalized, omitting any mention of auxiliary or cause, focusing on the event itself.
Ellipsis allows Khasi headlines to present agency, event, and consequence efficiently, often prioritizing what is new or surprising while presuming mutual background knowledge between writer and reader.

4.2.2 Nominalization

Nominalization, the conversion of verbs, adjectives, or clauses into noun forms, is strikingly prevalent. These nominal forms encapsulate complex events, qualities, or processes as "entities," offering abstraction, objectivity, and the ability to convey entire situations in a single phrase. Examples:

(9) *"Ki kam ki pahuh, dei ka jingjaituh kaba pynkyrduh kam."* (Mawphor, July 10, 2025)
("The jobs are abundant, it's the laziness that makes jobs lacking.")
"jingjaituh" (laziness), from the verb "jaituh" (to be lazy), and "pynkyrduh kam" (to cause job scarcity), are both noun forms expressing causes and states, allowing the headline to compress causality and evaluation.

(10) *"Ka pyrthei kylla khongpong, ka pisa ka daw bah jong ka jingpynjot ha ki liang baroh."* (Mawphor, May 14, 2025)
("The world has turned upside down, money is the main cause of destruction in all aspects.")
"jingpynjot" (destruction), "ka daw bah" (the main cause) nominalized processes encapsulating broader consequences.

(11) *"Ka jingdawa ban ithuh ia ka ktien Khasi ka ishu jaidbynriew."* (U Peitngor, June 6, 2025)
("The demand for the recognition of Khasi language is an ethnic issue.")
"jingdawa" (the demand), "ban ithuh" (to recognize) embedded as a non-finite clause, and "ishu jaidbynriew" (ethnic issue) all act as compact references to ongoing movements and concerns.

(12)*"Ka jingpynbeit thymmai ia ka jingiaid kali na surok Laitlyngkot–Langkyrdem."* (Batesi TV, July 6, 2025)
("Traffic management has been revised for the Laitlyngkot–Langkyrdem road.")
Both "jingpynbeit thymmai" (reform or adjustment) and "jingiaid kali" (traffic flow) are abstract noun forms replacing potentially clumsy verbal clauses.

(13) *"Ka jingsiew bai um kaba biang, ioh um pat tang 8 sien ha ka shibnai ha Mawlai."* (Rupang, June 21, 2025)
("Even with regular water payment, water was received only 8 times in a month in Mawlai.")
Here, "jingsiew" (payment) provides a nominal basis for expressing social complaint within a tight headline frame.

Nominalization not only saves space but allows headlines to foreground themes, issues, or results as "things," rendering them vivid yet succinct.

4.2.3 Non-finite Verb Forms and Clause Chaining

Khasi headlines make strategic and frequent use of infinitives and non-finite verb phrases, often with the marker *ban* ("to") for purpose, plan, or result. These structures allow headlines to imply intentions, hoped-for outcomes, or indirect reporting in minimal space. Examples:

(14) *"Nalor kaba ai jinghikai, donkam ruh ki polisi ban pynneh mei mariang."* (Mawphor, June 3, 2025)
("Apart from teaching, there is also a need for policies to conserve nature.")
"ban pynneh" ("to conserve") as a purpose clause.

(15) *"Rai ka HC ban shong bishar ia ka jingpynkynriah ia ki longiing na Them Iewmawlong."* (Mawphor, July 10, 2025)
("The High Court decided to hold a sitting to discuss the relocation of households from Them Iewmawlong.")
"ban shong bishar" (to sit for judgment/hearing) indicates purpose, while "jingpynkynriah" is a nominalization.

(16)*"Da ki kali elektrik wad lad ka sorkar Meghalaya ban pyniaid noh ha nongbah Shillong."* (Mawphor, July 10, 2025)
("The Meghalaya government is looking for ways to run electric vehicles in Shillong.")
"ban pyniaid noh" ("to run/operate") functions as an infinitive explaining the goal of the government's search for solutions.

(17) *"Yn ai jingmut u CS halor ka bhah kam ha jylla."* (Rupang, June 21, 2025)
("The Chief Secretary will give suggestions on job quotas in the state.")
"Yn ai jingmut" (will give suggestions) auxiliary plus non-finite structure for future events.

(18) *"Ym pat pyndonkam ka Nongpoh Town Committee ia ka kali kit ñuit ka KHADC."* (U Peitngor, July 9, 2025)
("The Nongpoh Town Committee has not yet used the waste-collecting vehicle from KHADC.")
"pyndonkam" (to use) appears in bare, context-driven non-finite form.

These non-finite structures help Khasi headlines remain forward-looking, purpose-oriented, and action-centric without recourse to lengthy subordinate clauses.

4.2.4 Classifier Use for Clarity and Precision

Khasi relies on classifiers, such as "ngut" for humans, "tylli" for inanimates, and gender particles like "u", "ka", "ki" much more than English. Classifiers appear even when contextually redundant in ordinary speech, but their explicit use in headlines ensures clarity with minimal words particularly in reporting numbers, participants, or affected parties. Examples:

(19) *"Kem ki pulit Assam ia ar ngut ki nongkhaii masi na Meghalaya."* (Mawphor, February 25, 2025)
("Assam police arrested two cattle traders from Meghalaya.")
"ar ngut" (two [human classifiers]) and "ki nongkhaii masi" (plural traders) specify agents and number, avoiding ambiguity.

(20) *"Wanpoi ki khusnam jong ka Durand Cup ha Shillong."* (Mawphor, July 10, 2025)
("The awards of the Durand Cup have arrived in Shillong.")
"ki khusnam" (multiple prizes, *ki* for inanimates).

(21) *"12 ngut ki rang MMA ka jylla kin ia aireng ha ka Shillong Cage Fighting Championship."* (T7, May 26, 2025)
("12 MMA fighters from the state will compete in the Shillong Cage Fighting Championship.")
"12 ngut" accurately pinpoints participants.

(22) *"Ar tylli ki team na Ribhoi, kawei na WJH kin mihkhmat ia ka Meghalaya."* (Batesi TV, July 6, 2025)
("Two teams from Ri-Bhoi, one from West Jaiñtia Hills will represent Meghalaya.")
"Ar tylli" (two [inanimate classifiers, for teams]) and "kawei" (one).

(23) *"Iap 22 ngut ki khyllung ha u missile ka Israel."* (T7, May 15, 2025)
("22 children died in a missile strike by Israel.")
"22 ngut" unequivocally signals human casualty, crucial in disaster/crime reports.

Such classifier use may feel repetitive, but it is a keystone of Khasi journalistic clarity, delivering specificity without elaborate description.

4.2.5 Tense and Aspect Marking

Though headlines favor immediacy and timelessness, Khasi headlines often incorporate aspectual and tense markers to indicate freshness, continuation, or planned action. Unlike English, where historical present is the default, Khasi can be more explicit using particles such as "la", "nang", "yn", and "pat".
Examples:

(24) *"La nang kulmar ka ktien Khasi."* (Mawphor, June 6, 2025)
("The Khasi language is getting complex.")
"La" (perfective marker) plus "nang" (continuation).

(25) *"Yn wan jngoh ka Myntri Kam Pla Pisa ka ri ia ka nongbah Shillong 3 sngi lynter."* (Mawphor, July 10, 2025)
("Finance Minister of the country to visit Shillong for 3 days.")
"Yn" functions as a future marker.

(26) *"Ym pat pyndonkam ka Nongpoh Town Committee ia ka kali kit ñuit ka KHADC."* (U Peitngor, July 9, 2025)

("Nongpoh Town Committee has not yet used the waste vehicle from KHADC.")
"Ym pat"negation plus "yet," shows incompletion or pending action.

(27) *"Hadien 53 snem, mynjur ka SCB ia ka Shillong Cantonment Building byelaws."* (U Peitngor, July 11, 2025)
("After 53 years, SCB approves Shillong Cantonment Building byelaws.")
Past event marked by "hadien 53 snem" and verb agreement.
These markers serve to anchor the news in a precise event frame, indicating what has changed, what is ongoing, or what is still expected.

4.2.6 Sentence Structure: Full Sentences, Fragments, and Rhetorical Devices

Khasi headlines balance between full sentential structures and terse, fragmentary forms, each chosen for strategic effect.

4.2.6.1 Full, Often Compressed Sentences:

(28) *"Phaikhmat ka sorkar ban leit rung iing noh ha nongkyndong ban ai injek Covid."* (Mawphor, February 25, 2022)
("The government now aims to go to villages for Covid vaccination.")

(29) *"Ka Sohra College ioh jingiaroh kum ka shlem jingkyrmen ia ki samla pule ha jingdap 44 snem."* (Mawphor, July 11, 2025)
("Sohra College receives praise as a beacon of hope for students on its 44th anniversary.")

4.2.6.2 Fragments/Omission-Driven Sentences:

(30) *"Shahkem 4 ngut ki nong Africa ha Hyderabad."* (U Nongsaiñ Hima, July 10, 2025)
("Four Africans were detained in Hyderabad.")

(31) *"Khang ban iaid trok, night super na Demseiñïong."* (Batesi TV, June 28, 2025)
("Ban on trucks, night buses from Demseiñïong.")

4.2.6.3 Interrogative and Rhetorical Use:

(32) *"Shaei ka hok longbriew manbriew ki kynthei ha ka ri Hynñiewtrep?"* (U Nongsaiñ Hima, July 4, 2025)
("Where are the human rights of women in the Hynñiewtrep nation?")
Rhetorical structure is used here to evoke emotion and critical engagement.

4.2.6.4 Quotative/Attribution Structures:

(33) *"'Ka Hamas ka la kloi ban iasuk noh': Trump."* (U Nongsaiñ Hima, July 10, 2025)
("'Hamas is now ready to reconcile'- Trump.")

(34) *"Ka lad ban weng jingeh ka NEHU, kala don ha lynti, ong u MP."* (T7, May 26, 2025)
("The way to resolve NEHU's problems is underway, says MP.")

Quotation/construction is direct, often including names and putting the key voice forward, especially in stories about policy, protest, or public statements.

4.2.7 Code-Mixing, Borrowing, and Modern Terms

While code-mixing is restrained compared with some regional languages, its presence is notable where technical, institutional, or modern lexicon is needed.
Examples:

(35) *"injek Covid[16]"* (Covid injection)
The key medical term is borrowed and accommodated in Khasi syntax.

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[16](Mawphor, February 25, 2022)

(36) *"Da ki kali elektrik wad lad ka sorkar Meghalaya[17]…"*
("By means of electric vehicles, the Meghalaya government is seeking solutions…")

(37) *"ki On-Street parking bad No parking zone ha Shillong[18]"*
("on-street parking and no parking zones in Shillong")
Direct borrowing for urban infrastructure, with Khasi articles and markers.

(38) *"U WhatsApp number[19]"*, *"khusnam jong ka Duranp Cup"*
(WhatsApp number; trophies of the Durand Cup)
International brand and event names, flexibly fitted to headlines.

Such borrowings reflect factual necessity, access to contemporary reference, and a modernizing newspaper voice, but always governed by Khasi syntax.

4.2.8 Visualizing Lexico-Grammatical Devices in Khasi Newspaper Headlines
To illustrate the patterns discussed in the lexico-grammatical analysis of Khasi newspaper headlines, below is a pie chart summarizing the frequency distribution of major linguistic devices used in the headlines, based on the analyzed corpus.
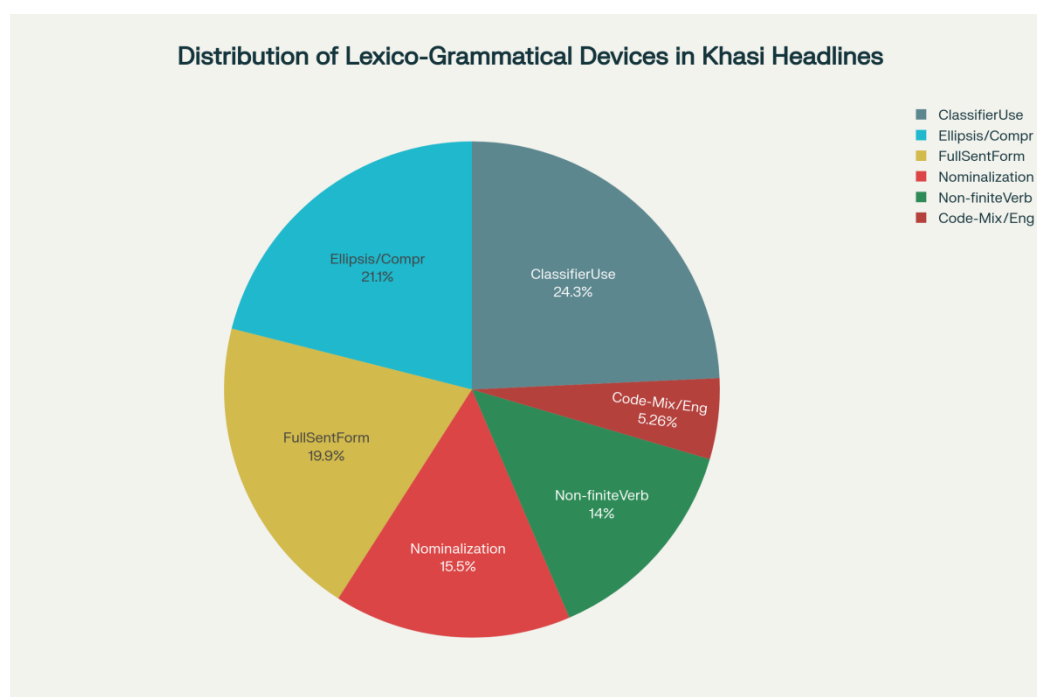

Figure 6: Pie chart showing the percentage distribution of various lexico-grammatical devices in Khasi newspaper headlines

The pie chart representing the frequency of lexico-grammatical devices in Khasi newspaper headlines highlights the central role of classifier use, which dominates the distribution and underscores Khasi's grammatical focus on clarity regarding number and reference, especially in news contexts that demand precision. Ellipsis and syntactic compression are nearly as prominent, illustrating how Khasi headline writers achieve brevity and immediacy by skillfully omitting predictable grammatical elements and auxiliary words, forcing the reader to infer missing details. Full sentential forms also represent a significant portion of the headlines, showing a balance between "headlinese" conciseness and the conventional clarity that comes from complete sentences. Nominalization and non-finite verb structures, present in roughly half the headlines, enable the packaging of actions, meanings, or intentions into dense, noun-like or infinitive expressions, facilitating efficient headline storytelling. Code-mixing appears far less frequently, signifying a measured openness to

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[17](Mawphor, July 10, 2025)
[18](Batesi TV, July 6, 2025)
[19](Batesi TV, June 29, 2025)

English borrowings mainly for modern or technical terms, while the core structure remains distinctly Khasi. Altogether, the chart reveals that Khasi headline construction is not reliant on a single feature, but orchestrates several strategies in tandem, achieving a communicative style that is concise, locally resonant, and highly functional for its readership.

4.2.8 Synthesis

The lexico-grammatical make-up of Khasi newspaper headlines reveals a field where economy of expression and force of communication meet. Through ellipsis and nominalization, Khasi journalists trim away all but the most critical elements; through non-finite clauses and classifier use, they maintain clarity, coherence, and a sense of progress. Tense/aspect markers and indirect expressions help frame events as ongoing, urgent, or deferred, while code-mixing introduces global relevance without undermining linguistic identity. Most importantly, the strategy is always one of reader engagement: inviting interpretation, supplying just enough information to ignite curiosity, and trusting a culturally attuned public to fill in the rest.

In this register, the Khasi headline is not just a product of news imperatives, but a living proof of the language's adaptability, precision, and vital communicative artistry.

V. Conclusion

This study has undertaken a comprehensive linguistic exploration of Khasi newspaper headlines, employing Montgomery's (2007) model to dissect both their semantic and lexico-grammatical dimensions. Through the analysis of 80 headlines drawn from six prominent Khasi newspapers, the research illuminates how headline writers blend linguistic innovation with cultural specificity to craft concise, impactful, and contextually resonant news openings.

At the semantic level, Khasi headlines predominantly foreground events and persons such as government bodies, community groups, and notable individuals while often strategically omitting or condensing circumstantial details. This selective explicitness not only aligns with global journalistic economy but also invites active reader engagement, fostering a dynamic interplay between text and audience typical of "tactical incompleteness." It reflects a culturally rooted communicative style, where shared knowledge and collective identity enable nuanced, yet compact, news representation.

In the realm of lexico-grammar, Khasi headlines display an artful orchestration of devices that serve the twin aims of economy and clarity. Ellipsis and syntactic compression allow maximal information in minimal space without sacrificing coherence. Nominalization is a hallmark, transforming actions and qualities into potent, noun-like carriers of meaning that enhance objectivity and thematic focus. Frequent use of classifiers upholds clarity and specificity, essential in a language rich with grammatical marking. Non-finite verb forms efficiently express purpose, future intention, and causation. While code-mixing appears reserved yet purposeful, it demonstrates Khasi media's adaptive interaction with global influences while protecting linguistic integrity.

Notably, Khasi headlines harmonize grammatical precision with communicative artistry, reflecting a media culture that balances tradition and modernity. The headlines serve not just as summaries, but as cultural touchstones, acting as gateways that concisely convey news while shaping reader perspectives and reinforcing community identity.

This research thus contributes a valuable case study to the growing discourse on media linguistics in minority languages, highlighting how Khasi journalists skillfully navigate linguistic constraints and editorial imperatives. It underscores the potential of applied linguistic frameworks like Montgomery's model to deepen understanding of how news language operates across diverse sociolinguistic landscapes.

Looking forward, these findings invite further investigations into audience reception, diachronic changes in headline language, and comparative studies across indigenous and regional media. Ultimately, this study affirms the newspaper headline as a powerful linguistic and social instrument, a site where the Khasi language breathes, adapts, and flourishes in the digital age.

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