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ACTIVATING LESSON SCENARIO
developed as part of the project

‘INNOVATIONS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION’

TOPIC

Clickbait – When the Headline Lies More than the Content
(Analysis of linguistic and visual tricks designed to attract attention)

1. Lesson objectives

The student:

- Knows what clickbait is and what its features are.
- Recognises linguistic and visual tricks used in headlines.
- Can point out the difference between a reliable headline and a manipulative one.
- Understands why clickbait is created (economic purpose, emotional impact, manipulation of opinion).
- Develops the ability for critical reading and analysis of media content.

2. Target group

Primary school students.

3. Teaching methods

- Brainstorming
- Mini-lecture with examples
- Linguistic analysis of headlines
- Group work exercise
- Guided discussion
- Individual reflection



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4. Teaching aids / sources

- Computer, projector or interactive whiteboard
- Set of article headlines (realistic, but fictional or thematically neutral) – both reliable and clickbait
- Worksheets with guiding questions for analysis
- Infographic “How Clickbait Works?”
- Educational tools and sources:
 - Poland: <https://demagog.org.pl>, <https://konkret24.tvn24.pl>
 - Czech Republic: <https://manipulatori.cz>
 - Slovakia: <https://demagog.sk>
 - Ukraine: <https://www.stopfake.org/en/news/>
 - European Union: <https://edmo.eu>, <https://euvsdisinfo.eu>

Part 2 — Lesson Procedure (45 min)

1. Introduction – Does Every Headline Tell the Truth? (5–7 min)

1. Brainstorming (2–3 min)

- The teacher asks students to recall headlines they have recently seen on the internet (news portals, YouTube, TikTok, advertisements, social media).
- Students give examples – these may be neutral or sensational (e.g., “Nobody expected this!”, “Shocking discovery by doctors!”, “This trick will change your life!”).
- The teacher writes several headlines on the board and then asks:
 - “When you clicked on such headlines, was the content always consistent with what the title promised?”

2. Guiding questions for a short discussion (2 min)

- Have you ever found that the content of an article was completely different from what the headline suggested?
- Why do authors sometimes create headlines full of emotion or exaggeration?
- Can a headline be a form of manipulation – an attempt to steer our emotions or our decision to click a link?
- What emotions are most often triggered by sensational headlines (e.g., shock, fear, curiosity, outrage)?
(The teacher may ask if students then felt “manipulated” or regretted clicking on such an article.)

3. Teacher’s explanatory note – extended information (2–3 min)

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• Clickbait is “bait for clicks” – a headline or thumbnail (e.g., an image in a YouTube video) that encourages the viewer to open the content, often using:

- Exaggerated or dramatic expressions (“nobody will believe...”, “shocking discovery!”),
- Deliberate omission of key facts to build tension or a sense of mystery,
- Promises of extraordinary content that ultimately turn out to be ordinary or inconsistent with the headline.
 - Main goals of clickbait:
- **Profit** – the more clicks, the more ad views and money for the site’s author,
- **Influencing public opinion** – a headline can change the way we think about an event before we even read the article,
- **Spreading fake news** – sensational titles attract attention and are eagerly shared, even if they are false.
 - The problem with clickbait:
- It can lead to disinformation, as many people read only the headline and do not check the content,
- It reinforces the internet’s “culture of sensation,” where the most emotional news spreads fastest, even if false or misleading.

2. Mini-lecture: What is Clickbait and How Does it Work? (10–12 min)

1. Introduction (1–2 min)

- The teacher asks:
 - “Have you ever clicked on an article or video whose title promised a sensation, but the content was boring or completely different?”
 - “Why do such headlines attract our attention?”
 - Short explanation: clickbait is a “bait for clicks” – a specially constructed headline or thumbnail designed to encourage opening the content, but often misleading or exaggerated to gain as many views as possible.

2. Features of clickbait headlines (4–5 min)

The teacher presents the most common techniques, giving examples:

- 1. Sensational words**
 - Use of emotional, dramatic words:
“*SHOCK!*”, “*TERRIFYING!*”, “*YOU WON’T BELIEVE WHAT HAPPENED...*”, “*SECRET GOVERNMENT PLAN*”.
 - Goal: to spark curiosity and emotions to compel clicking.
- 2. Exaggeration and dramatization**

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- Creating the impression that an event is more important or dangerous than it really is.
 - Example: “This ordinary drink KILLS millions of people every day!” – content actually discusses excessive consumption of fizzy drinks.
- 3. Unanswered questions**
- Headline format that leaves a mystery, e.g.:
“Is your phone listening to you? The truth is shocking!”
 - Psychological mechanism: the audience wants to know the answer, even if the text does not contain reliable information.
- 4. Manipulative images and graphics**
- Video thumbnails or images that do not match the content or are exaggerated: dramatic colours, loud captions, exaggerated facial expressions.
 - Often used to catch attention while scrolling through a site or social media.
- 5. Promises of extraordinary content or rewards**
- Headlines suggesting a shocking discovery or miraculous solution to a problem, e.g.:
“This one trick will make you lose weight in a week – doctors hate it!”
(You can show examples of YouTube clickbait thumbnails – e.g., titles in all caps with exaggerated emojis).

Part 3 — Goals of Creating Clickbait & Consequences

3. Goals of Creating Clickbait (2–3 min)

Economic:

- Each click = an ad view = more revenue for the site or channel owner.
- Even if the content is poor, what counts is the number of clicks, not the quality of the information.

Manipulative:

- Clickbait is used to control the audience’s emotions: provoke fear, anger, outrage, but also curiosity or hope.
- Emotions make us share content more often, even if we haven’t read it.

Strengthening fake news:

- Clickbait headlines often spread faster than factual news because they are more emotional and memorable.
- This allows false information to go viral before it’s verified.



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4. Consequences of Clickbait (2 min)

- **Shallow knowledge** – many users read only headlines, not the full article, leading to half-truths or misconceptions.
- **“Chasing the sensation”** – media compete for our attention by creating increasingly exaggerated titles, lowering the quality of online information.
- **Disinformation and information chaos** – sensational titles lead to sharing false content, rumours, and fake news.
- **Information fatigue** – audiences lose trust in the media and feel deceived or manipulated.

5. Summary and Question to Students (1 min)

- Clickbait is a tool for attracting our attention, but often at the cost of truth and reliability.
- Teacher asks:
 - “Can we create headlines that are interesting but not misleading? What might they look like?”
(Encouragement for further discussion in the next part of the lesson.)

Part 4 — Group Exercise: “Which Headline Lies?” (15–20 min)

Exercise Goals

- Develop the ability to recognise clickbait headlines.
- Practise analysing linguistic and visual tricks that influence our emotions and clicking decisions.
- Practise creating reliable, informative titles instead of sensational ones.

1. Group Division (1 min)

- The class is divided into 3–4 person teams.
- Each group receives a set of 6 headlines (3 clickbait, 3 reliable).
- Headlines should be realistic but fictional or politically neutral, e.g.:
 1. “Shock! This food can kill in a minute – doctors warn!”
 2. “New research: high-fibre diet reduces risk of heart disease.”
 3. “Nobody expected this! See what this politician did during a meeting.”
 4. “Yesterday in Krakow the largest educational park for children opened.”
 5. “This one trick will cut your electricity bill in half!”

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6. “New WHO report: climate change affects young people’s mental health.”

2. Support Tool – ‘10 Clickbait Tricks’ Card (2–3 min)

Each group gets a card listing the 10 most common clickbait techniques:

No.	Clickbait Trick	Example
1	Shocking words & exclamations	“SHOCK!”, “TERRIFYING!”
2	Mystery, omission	“You won’t believe what happened...”
3	Promise of extraordinary result	“This trick will change your life...”
4	Fearmongering	“This food could kill you!”
5	Unanswered questions	“Is your phone spying on you?”
6	Exaggerated emotions	“Everyone is in shock!”, “Nobody can believe this!”
7	Fact exaggeration	“The biggest scandal in history...”
8	Manipulative images/graphics	Thumbnails with loud captions, dramatic colours
9	Promise of revealing “secret information”	“Companies are hiding this secret from you!”
10	Numbers without context	“10x greater risk!” without sources

3. Group Task (7–8 min)

Each group:

1. Marks clickbait headlines – identifying which are sensational and which are reliable.
2. Notes which tricks from the “10 Clickbait Tricks” list are used – there may be more than one per headline.
3. Proposes a more reliable title for at least one clickbait headline, ensuring it conveys the content informatively without emotional manipulation.

Table to complete:

Headline Clickbait? (Yes/No) Which Trick? (No. from list) Better Headline Version



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Headline Clickbait? (Yes/No) Which Trick? (No. from list) Better Headline Version

1

2

4. Presenting Results (4–5 min)

- Each group presents its conclusions in 2–3 minutes:
 - Which headlines were considered clickbait.
 - Which tricks were used.
 - How the headline could be rewritten to be interesting but reliable.
- The teacher writes the most frequently used tricks on the board, creating a common warning list for the whole class.

5. Exercise Summary (1–2 min)

- Clickbait works because it triggers emotions and curiosity, but it often misleads or exaggerates.
- It's not worth sharing content based only on the headline – you need to check the source and read the article.
- Anyone can learn to create headlines that are both interesting and reliable, encouraging the reading of facts rather than emotional manipulation.

Part 5 — Discussion & Reflection

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6. Discussion: Why Do We Click on Clickbait? (8–10 min)

Purpose:

- Understand the psychological mechanisms behind clickbait.
- Realise how emotions affect our online behaviour.
- Develop safe and critical habits when reading headlines.

Discussion questions:

1. What makes some headlines tempting, even if we know they might be exaggerated?
2. Are emotional headlines more “engaging” than neutral, factual ones? Why?
3. How can clickbait influence our opinion before we read the article?
4. Is it possible to avoid clickbait entirely online?
5. How should we react when a headline turns out to be misleading?

Additional discussion ideas:

- Students share personal experiences:
 - “When was the last time you clicked something you regretted?”
 - “Did you ever share something just because the headline shocked you?”
- Talk about the emotions headlines evoke: curiosity, fear, outrage, amusement.

7. Summary and Reflection (7–10 min)

Individual reflection:

Students complete the sentences:

- “I have learned that clickbait...”
- “The type of headlines that mislead me most are...”
- “Before I click next time, I will...”

Class discussion:

- What surprised you most about today’s examples?
- Which tricks are easiest to spot now?
- Are all clickbait headlines harmful, or are there neutral ones?

Class summary list:

5 Ways Not to Fall for Clickbait

1. Always check the source.
2. Read the full article before forming an opinion.

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3. Question exaggerated or emotional titles.
4. Don't share based on a headline alone.
5. Compare the same news on multiple sites.

Part 6 — Glossary

- **Clickbait** – a headline or thumbnail designed to grab attention, often exaggerated or misleading.
- **Manipulative headline** – a title created to evoke emotion (shock, anger, fear) at the expense of accuracy.
- **Curiosity effect** – a psychological mechanism that makes us want to know missing information.
- **Disinformation** – false or manipulated information spread with the intention of influencing opinions.

Part 7 — Teacher's Methodological Guide

Preparation:

- Prepare a balanced set of headlines (clickbait and reliable).
- Ensure all examples are fictional or neutral to avoid political bias.
- Prepare the “10 Clickbait Tricks” card for group work.

Lesson delivery:

- Start with platforms familiar to students (YouTube, TikTok, Instagram).
- Keep explanations short and focus on visual examples.
- Use questions to engage students in critical thinking.

Moderation tips:

- Ensure each group understands the task before starting.
- Encourage giving reasons: “Why do you think so?”
- Highlight subtle differences – some headlines are partly clickbait.

Atmosphere & safety:

- Avoid ridiculing wrong answers.
- Create a safe space for sharing personal experiences.
- Remind students about respect and netiquette when discussing examples.



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Educational goals:

- Show that media use clickbait for economic gain.
- Teach resistance to emotional manipulation.
- Develop skills in critical reading of headlines.

Possible extensions:

- Homework: find and analyse a clickbait headline from the past week.
- Class project: “Our Class Code of Responsible Internet Use.”
- Creative task: rewrite 3 clickbait headlines into reliable versions.

Part 8 — Educational and Fact-checking Sources

- EDMO – European Digital Media Observatory – <https://edmo.eu>
- EUvsDisinfo – European External Action Service – <https://euvsdisinfo.eu>
- Demagog.org.pl (Poland) – <https://demagog.org.pl>
- Konkret24 (Poland) – <https://konkret24.tvn24.pl>
- Manipulátoři.cz (Czech Republic) – <https://manipulatori.cz>
- Demagog.sk (Slovakia) – <https://demagog.sk>
- StopFake.org (Ukraine) – <https://www.stopfake.org/en/news/>

