

In the Name of God

The Most Gracious

The Most Merciful

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Faculty of Language and Literature
English Department**

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Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)**

**Comparative Genre Analysis of English Newspaper
Editorials across English and Persian**

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*To My **Parents***

For Their Unyielding Love,

Relentless Support,

and Constant Encouragement

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Abstract

The present research was conducted to accomplish two purposes. Firstly, it aimed to explore and describe schematic structure or what Halliday and Hassan (1989, p.64) have called “Generic Structure Potential” (GSP) of American English, Iranian Persian and Iranian English newspaper editorials within systemic functional linguistics. Secondly, a quantitative cross-comparison was made to investigate whether there were statistically significant difference among GSP of these newspaper editorials.

To this end, a total of 75 editorials, electronically culled from three newspapers, were chosen to comprise the corpus of this study: 25 English editorials from an American English newspaper (*New York Times*), 25 English editorials from an Iranian English newspaper (*Tehran Times*) and 25 Persian editorials from an Iranian Persian newspaper (*Keyhan*).

Analyzing schematic structure of the corpus showed that GSP of American English newspaper editorials was $H^{(PBI)^{SE^{(DE)^{CE^{[GS.[(ESCS)^{(ESCIS)^{(ESDS)^{(S)}}]}}$ and GSP of Iranian Persian and Iranian English newspaper editorials was $H^{(PBI)^{SE^{(DE)^{(CE)^{[(GS).(S)]}}$.

The analysis of data revealed that statistically significant differences dominated the relation between Iranian Persian and American newspaper editorials, in terms of all structural elements. Regarding American English and Iranian English newspaper editorials, there were statistically significant differences between all structural elements of their GSP except for two elements, PBI (.377), DE (.154) and S (.115). On the other hand, no statistically significant differences existed between GSP of Iranian English and Iranian Persian newspaper editorials except for the frequency

of occurrence of one structural element-PBI (0.43). These results indicated that Iranians transfer GSP of Persian editorials to the editorials they write in English.

Moreover, based on the frequency of occurrence of structural elements in GSP of newspaper editorials, it was suggested that while Iranian English and Persian newspaper editorials are dominated by descriptive mode of representation, the predominant mode of representation in American English editorials is the argumentative mode, the function of which is to persuade the reader.

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Abbreviations

AE: American English

CE: Giving Causes of the Event

ESCIS: Emphasizing Solution by Stating Consequences of Ignoring Solution

ESDS: Emphasizing Solution by Deemphasizing other Solutions

ESCS: Emphasizing Solution by Claiming Contribution of Solution

GS: Giving Solution

GSP: Generic structure potential

H: Headline

IE: Iranian English

IP: Iranian Persian

KN: Keyhan Newspaper

NY: New York Times Newspaper

PBI: Providing Background Information

S: Summarizing

SE: Stating the Event

SFL: Systemic functional linguistics

TT: Tehran Times Newspaper

Symbols

(): optional elements

^: Fixed order of sequence

. : optional sequence

[] : restraint on sequence

*: relation

Table of Phonetic Transliteration

Phonetic Symbol	Example	
/a/.....as	“dar”	در
/aa/.....as	“aanche”	آنچه
/ʼ/.....as	“ma’akus”	معکوس
/e/.....as	“naghshe”	نقشه
/i/.....as	“vaghti”	وقتی
/o/.....as	“moshaarekat”	مشارکت
/ow/.....as	“moskow”	مسکو
/u/.....as	“soghut”	سقوط
/y/.....as	“yaa”	ی
/-ye/.....as	“donyaa-ye”	دنی‌ای
/b/.....as	“baaz”	باز
/z/.....as	“baazsaazi”	بازسازی
/d/.....as	“dast”	دست
/ʌ/.....as	“laahe”	لا‌هه
/t/.....as	“sokut”	سکوت
/j/.....as	“mojedad”	مجدد
/v/.....as	“tavaghof”	توقف
/h/.....as	“harif”	حرف
/m/.....as	“matn”	متن
/n/.....as	“entexaab”	انتخاب
/f/.....as	“forsat”	فرصت

/s/.....as	“bast”	بست
/p/.....as	“parvande”	پرونده
/k/.....as	“keyhaan”	کی پھان
/g/.....as		لگو “olghu”
gh/.....as	“ghiam” قیام	
/kh/.....as	“mikhorad”	می خورد
/sh/.....as	“hashi-ye” حاشیہ	
/zh/.....as	“aanzhiyograafi”	آئری و گرافی
/ch/.....as	“cheraa”	چرا

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Preliminaries

One of the issues that have come under the spotlight of many involved in the field of language teaching is contrastive rhetoric. Contrastive rhetoric developed out of the pedagogical concerns related to writing in English as a second language (ESL) (Connor, 1996). Kaplan (1966) in his first article that initiated the cross-linguistic comparison of rhetorical styles claimed that each language and culture has a paragraph organization that is unique to it. This argument formed the foundation of contrastive rhetoric hypothesis, which has influenced the research on writing. Later, in 1978, Kaplan expanded his theory from paragraph level to text level and posited that “rhetorical patterns of texts might vary widely with languages” (p. 66).

To test Kaplan’s (1978) claim, many researchers conducted studies on texts written in different languages. Most of these pioneering studies focused on students’ school essays. To explore the validity of application of Kaplan’s (1978) claim to other modes and domains, researchers require a criterion according to which they can decide on the comparability of texts written in different languages (Connor, 1996). According to Connor (1996), they adapt genre theory as the criterion, the fundamental concept of which is “genre.” The working definition of genre was proposed by Swales (1990). Swales (1990) defined genre as a set of communicative events whose members share the same purpose. This purpose constitutes the rationale for the genre, which in turn shapes schematic structure of genre. In this definition, text types are defined by the communicative purpose. In other words, it is the communicative purpose of texts that determines their comparability.

Applying the concept of genre as the comparability criterion and drawing on Kaplan's (1978) claim that there might be differences in the rhetorical pattern or what Swales (1990, p. 44) called "schematic structure" of the same text written in different languages, researchers have conducted comparative studies on rhetorical patterning of the same genre written in different languages. Not surprisingly, most of these studies have focused on academic genres such as research articles (Najjar, 1990; Martin, 2003; Kwan, 2006; Amirian, Kassaian & Tavakoli, 2008). Some other comparative inquiries have concentrated on less public genres, such as recommendation letters (Bouton, 1995), research reports (Riazi and Fiangol, 2002), and editorial letters (Flowerdew & Dudley-Evans, 2002; Esther Vasquez del Arbol, 2005).

However, very few comparative studies have focused on the similarities/distinctions between rhetorical structures of such pervasive everyday text as newspaper editorials (Connor, 1996). In fact, from a comparative genre analytic perspective, editorial is a neglected genre. The purpose of editorial, as a text type or genre, is to persuade the reader (Connor, 1996). It presents the public opinion and plays a definitive role in the formation and altering public opinion (Van Dijk, 1995). Its function is to comment on a recent event and gain the reader's agreement or corroborate a pre-existing consensus through a series of textual strategies (Alsono, 2008). As its definition shows, editorial is a too public genre to be disregarded in comparative genre studies. In this light, the present research is an attempt to present a contribution to the field of comparative genre analysis of newspaper editorials in different languages.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Each type of genre has a schematic structure unique to it, which is shaped by the purpose of the discourse community by which that genre is used (Swales, 2004). The uniqueness of schematic structure of genres can be extended to individual languages as well. Kaplan (1966) posited that each language has its own rhetorical patterns, which can bring about variation in rhetorical patterning of a specific type of genre.

Newspaper editorials, as a type of genre, and the best exemplar of persuasive essay in each country can be subject to such a variation (Connor, 1996). Nevertheless, only a handful number of studies have focused on newspaper editorials. More importantly, no attempt, as to the knowledge of the researcher, has ever been made to investigate the possibility of variation in the generic structure of newspaper editorials across Persian and English. To fill the identified gap in this field of research, this study is going to explore this possibility by investigating and comparing generic structure of Persian and English editorials.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

As yet no comparative study has been conducted on the possibility of variation in the generic structure of English and Persian editorials, this study attempts to apply systemic functional linguistics to explore and compare generic structure potential of American English, Iranian Persian and Iranian English newspaper editorials. As a result, the possibility of variation in the generic structure of newspaper editorials