English Academic Writing Skills of Online News: A Study of English Course on Chinese and Kurdish Students

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate students' perception of Kurdish and Chinese editorial writing, and find out the differences of linguistical complexity between those editorials. Methods of this study were quantitative approaches, using descriptive and inferential statistics to describe the reporting of news. The major finding, revealed that the Kurdish students' perception of editorial' writing were more complex linguistically than Chinese editorials, and it had significant differences. Secondly, the Kurdish and Chinese students' perception of editorial texts studied were of argumentative nature. Thirdly, with regard to the reporting purpose, none of the editorials in the corpus aim to amuse readers. Chinese editorials accomplish on one goal while Kurdish editorials convey multiple aims. Fourthly, both Chinese and Kurdish texts were similar in terms of titles and grammatical structure. Therefore, most of the titles were summary statements and sentence structure rather than catchy headlines. These findings assist with research and EFL/EJP students to be observant of the linguistic differences between Kurdish and Chinese in English forms. In implication, the recent study improves the quality of editorial writings of Kurdish writers; it provides an option for further studies of linguistics between two other languages.

Keywords: English Course, Academic Writing, Online News, Contrastive Study

1. INTRODUCTION

In modern day society, newspaper editorials have a major role in informing readers of current issues. Thus, it has caught the attention of many scholars in terms of its language discourse. News articles express hidden meanings through the language applied; however, it does not lead to the direct information. Language is, as [19] states, an intermediate ruling power, which is capable to uncover hidden philosophy intended to develop values and social norms [4][18][13]. [1] Declared that, alongside the novel, the daily newspaper is certainly the absolute most broadly read written genre. This study intends to provide a descriptive contrastive of online newspaper editorial from native Chinese and Kurdish in English form. It outlines the similarities and differences between the two languages in terms of linguistic complexity texts. Clearly, both spoken and written communication in any language has three functions, as proposed by [5], which are ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational function delivers the thoughts of outer world. While,

interpersonal function focuses on the relation between the speakers and readers. Textual function proposes how written parts; sentence and paragraph are connected with one another to produce a smooth flow of reading [16][4]. Surprisingly, a few studies have been conducted on Kurdish literature, particularly, editorials in Kurdish newspaper. Based on the previous study [15] in his study he considered English and Kurdish connective and conjunctive relations in the argumentative type of the online newspaper opinion articles. [2] Extensively, the role of pronouns related to political newspaper discourses. They analyzed excerpts from news articles in Iraqi English newspaper, known as the Kurdish Globe (KG). It revealed that KG newspaper made use of direct quotation of American politicians' statements, which contained plural and possessive pronouns. Sun (2014) has conducted a contrastive study about the thinking patterns in news comment between English and Chinese news, it is found out that the Chinese writers tend to use long articles and express their opinion extensively. Additionally, Chinese headlines are longer than English

headlines. The background of this study is based on the originality research of the news editorials amongst the Chinese and Kurdish.

Contrastive analysis involves two aspects; describing different languages and juxtaposing for comparison [8]. Modern CA studies incorporate with a comparative analysis of writing in different languages. These languages content compositions for local speakers, which are from various cultures, frequently professional work inspected with their rhetorical and social setting, cultural context, and intellection. After [14] founded CA, there has been further improvement, particularly with the development of discourse studies as a new area of analysis in the 1970s and 1980s. Kaplan's original article, in which he analyzed a range of 600 ESL papers composed by understudies from various societies—Arabic, Chinese, French, Japanese, and Russian—set the main paces for contrastive discourse as a field of study. Kaplan's essential idea was that cross culture and thinking pattern contrasted the societies, which influenced languages. In a wide sense, CA is dependably available in linguistics and language teaching materials [12][1][3].

Editorial Purpose Analysis (EPA) had been conducted to determine the purpose(s) of each editorial in the corpus and to compare or contrast them as a group. [17] [8], classified editorials by their purposes as: 1) To inform: the writer illuminates and explains the news for the reader's better comprehension of what has happened/is occurring. It is significant and potential which effects typically everyone; 2) To argue that/for/against: the writer tries to persuade the persuader that something is/isn't valid, ought/ought not to be done and to generally give the reasons why s/he accepts so; 3) To criticize: the author communicates objection to somebody or something as unsuitable or not satisfactory and for the most part it gives the reasons why s/he believes so; 4) To praise: the writer contributes somebody or something; 5) To call for action: the author tries to induce the reader that the persuader or the third party ought to do/ought not to accomplish something; 6) To amuse: the essay passes on his/her message engagingly or ironically.

Based on [16], the forty titles in the corpus are analyzed and followed by the number which corresponds to Toommanon s' coding system as:

1) Label Head: the writer tells merely the reader what the editorial is concerned with. It does not attract much attention. 2) Summary Statement: the main idea of the article is summarized in the title to convey the message that the writer considers significant. 3) Striking Statement: the writer uses catchy words, phrases, or sentences to attract the reader's attention. 4) Descriptive Phrase: the writer uses descriptive words such as adjectives or uses words figuratively to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind. 5) Quotation: the writer may quote others' words and put them in quotation marks or use a well-known phrase such as a proverb. 6) Alliteration: the writer uses the words that begin with the same sound to give a special effect. 7) Literary Allusion: the writer brings attention to a particular subject by indirectly referring to a person, event, or story. 8) Question: the writer addresses a problem as a title. 9) Direct Address: the writer directly addresses someone, who can be the reader or the third party. 10) First or Third Person Statement: the writer uses first or third person pronoun to announce editorial policy. Moreover, the accompanying codes utilized as part of this examination for the PS investigation are; situation, problem, solution, and evaluation [19].

An English Course student who had been enrolled in the autumn course, was required to have the ability to write academic papers. Chinese and Kurdish are not native speakers of English; therefore, they have similar perceptions of English. The recent study shows that Kurdish students have cultural awareness, which plays an essential role in the process of English language learning. Hence, culture should always be integrated with language learning. In the meantime, Chinese students' perception of learning experience is mostly influenced by their prior exposure to Chinese teaching and learning styles, the teacher needs to assist learners in developing their own learning strategies in the academic adaptation.

Regardless of the importance of analysis in using proper English through students' academic writing experiences, this study aims to explore the students' perception of linguistical complexity of editorials of Chinese and Kurdish. The present research used a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative data. This paper could be very facilitative, especially for EFL Kurdish learners. Since, currently there is limited research in this field for Kurdistan and the Kurdish dialects, therefore, this paper serves to assist and educate future research students in this field of language.

2. METHOD

2.1. Design of Study

This study approached quantitative research through descriptive and comparative analysis. The descriptive statistics purposed to obtain the percentage number of the structure components (Daily News), perceived by the English course students in Wuhan and Kurdistan. Moreover, the 100 students were eligible as participants, and took the English Course in autumn. In addition, to compare the daily news structure components between China daily and E-Kurd, T-test analysis was applied.

2.2. Data Collection

Editorials from the two newspapers (Ekurd.net and Daily China.com electronic) assembled in the same period and students analyzed through their perception

based on their English academic writing. 220 editorials were based on similarity contents, and were chosen in this study to be analyzed, they were indifferently separated into two groups; 1) CHI group: Chinese students who wrote in English and published in China. 2) EKU group: Kurdish students who wrote in English and published in Kurdistan. Different units of measurement were used in this study to describe and compare the length and complexity of linguistic units in the texts between Daily China.com and EKurd.net. How each one is counted is different and explored by Software of Wordsmith version 6 [19]. Microsoft Word, and Statistical tools software has been used to analyze the collected data and to display this data in a comprehensive format. Descriptive data is presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Editorials Collected

NEWSPAPER	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	Total
China Daily	17	13	3	14	16	63
Ekurd Daily	30	31	31	30	35	157
Total Number of Editorials	47	44	61	44	51	220

2.3. Data Analysis

China Daily and E-Kurd provided data as daily online news. The components of structure such as length and complexity of linguistic units; word length; sentence; paragraph; connectives; and pronouns were analyzed through statistical tools software. The descriptive statistic analyzed the amount of component in the writing structure. Moreover, for the comparison of the perception of the two news pieces written in English, t-test analysis was applied.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Six Structure Components

This study revealed those aspects of students' perception of writing skills and elaborated on each component. The English Course students analyzed six components. Amongst the two groups CHI and EKU editorials, EKU had the highest numbers in every unit of measurement. EKU had the highest number of words, sentences, paragraphs, and conjunctions. In contrast, CHI had the lowest numbers in every unit of measurement. The mean number of all the groups is shown in in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of mean (Words, Sentences, Paragraphs, Conjunctions)

Groups	Words	Sentences	Paragraphs	Conjunctions
CHI	335.8500	12.26500	8.1000	1.0588
EKU	586.8000	24.6500	14.4500	1.1176

These findings support the complexity theory. It confirms that the concept of complexity and difficulty should be kept distinct. Those complexities relate to information processing and discourse understanding [13]. The length and complexity of linguistic units are divided into six aspects.

(1) Word Length.

(2) The words counted from the title to the end of each editorial.

(3) Sentence. To compare CHI group sentences with EKU group sentences, its counted manually and Count Wordsmith tool program (V.6, 2017) has been used, which follows basic English grammatical structures. For the sentences counted from the body of each editorial, excluding the title. The sentences have to be appropriate and withing the English sentence structure criteria, which normally contains one independent clause with a finite verb [9].

(4) Paragraph. This study found out that all of the sentences express the writer's main idea about that topic. Moreover, Microsoft Word was used to count the paragraphs in the editorials, it had been counted manually in the corpus as well.

(5) Connectives. Conjunctions or Connectives were used for reading sentences, clauses and paragraphs [5]). [19] Chinese EFL students had cases of speaking and listening appreciation, as far as utilizing the right connectives. Wordsmith was used as a tool to count the connectives in the corpus.

(6) Pronouns. [14] The use of third personal pronouns in the editorials are more stylistic than first and second personal pronouns because the 3rd person is anyone or anything else, who may or may not be present (he, she, it, they), but with a non-participatory role. In addition, the third personal pronoun refers to people in general [14][2].

Those six structure components that have been concluded; the mean numbers show the finding that the CHI group had the fewest mean numbers in every unit of measurement. Meanwhile, the EKU group had the highest mean number in every unit of measurement excluding the conjunctions and pronouns, which is of no significant difference between the two groups in terms of conjunctions and pronouns. However, the EKU texts had the highest of number words, which means, EKU editorials do not tend to use many conjunctions. [6] Claimed that, "coordinators and subordinators" is the umbrella term for conjunction. Surprisingly, the comparison of conjunctions amongst the EKU and CHI groups are quite enclosed. The EKU group used 19 different types of connectives, while; CHI used only 18 different kinds of connectives. The conjunctions of "Meanwhile and Previously" were the most common frequency conjunctions in CHI group. While the EKU group usually used numerous conjunctions, but "Although and Next to" were the most frequent ones.

3.2. Linguistically Complex the T-Test of the Groups (Chi Daily And E-Kurd)

In summary, table 3 shows the relative complexity linguistic units per group as judged by the number of T-test constituent elements in each word, sentence, paragraph, conjunction and pronoun per text.

Table 3. Linguistically Complex T-test Result

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
CHI	8	64.7030	114.57389	40.50799
EKU	8	104.5138	199.67721	70.59656

Based on table 3, the examined CHI editorials have the lower mean than EKU group. The significant difference between them in linguistic complexity is M=64.7030<104.5138 which means, there is a significant different between the CHI group and the EKU group in reporting news editorials. Overall, EKU editorials are the least linguistically complex. Referring back to means reported in earlier tables, it is especially interesting that EKU texts have the highest numbers of unit at each level. According to these quantitative measures, CHI texts have the lowest numbers at every unit of measurement excluding third personal pronouns measures highest in comparison with the EKU and conjunctions it covers higher level according to total number of all units.

Editorial Purpose Analysis (EPA) the primary purpose of each editorial, CHI texts convey 12 secondary goals, while EKU texts convey 26 and this might be because of the articles of EKU group are longer than CHI

groups as proved aforementioned. The total count of editorial purposes by group regardless of whether they are Primary or secondary is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Editorial Purpose by Group

Editorial purpose	CHI	EKU
Inform/explain	11	20
Criticize	8	15
Argue	6	13
Call for action	7	9
Amuse	0	0
Praise	0	0

As it can be seen, the most striking contrast between the two groups, concerning purpose, is that none of the editorials in the corpus aim to amuse the reader and for an entertaining or satirical manner. Apart from that, EKU editorials are slightly similar to CHI editorials in many aspects. EKU and CHI are both less likely to inform/explain, criticize, argue, and to call for action. CHI and EKU are both dissimilar in the numbers of purposes per editorial. Eight CHI editorials have only one goal, while entire EKU editorials have more than one purpose. In other words, CHI editorials try to accomplish only one goal about half of the time while EKU editorials usually convey multiple aims.

Regarding grammatical structure of the title, there are no editorials that appear to follow Tommanon's claim that the title is generally a phrase. In contrast, the majority of EKU and CHI editorial titles in the corpus are sentences. In other words, the entire editorial titles written are in sentences in the corpus rather than catchy phrases.

The Contrasting English online news reporting between EKU and CHI editorials is the primary purpose in this paper, and this distinctive study classifies into four aspects; first, linguistical complexity units between EKU and CHI, which follows words, sentences, paragraphs, pronouns, and conjunctions. Based on the quantitative analysis, aforementioned the differences between EKU and CHI editorials, the EKU editorials are more linguistically complex than CHI editorials (M=64.7030<104.5138). In terms of personal pronouns specifically, the CHI texts can be seen as more stylistic than EKU due to CHI editorials almost always present third personal pronouns and they do not use second personal pronouns as much as EKU texts. Hence, EKU articles present third personal pronouns after using second and first personal pronouns respectively. Despite the fact that the word count's ratio between the Chinese and Kurdish editorials is far apart but, when it comes to conjunctions that are counted between the Chinese and Kurdish, they are relatively similar. It shows that CHI editorials use conjunctions efficiently; whereas, EKU editorials extend the word count without using enough conjunctions for connectivity.

Second, EKU and CHI editorials in the ways of English electronic news reporting, in terms of grammatical structures and title types, it revealed that both of the groups tend to use more of a summary statement and generally tend to use sentences rather than captivating phrases. Third, in identifying argumentative and expository editorials between EKU and CHI editorials in English news reporting are judged by the findings. EKU and CHI appear to be argumentative than descriptive; each article in the corpus includes at least one problem component.

Fourth, both EKU and CHI have the most remarkable similarity in English electronic news reporting editorials purpose, and it is that none of the editorials in the corpus aim to amuse or to entertain in a satirical manner. But the CHI editorials try to accomplish only one goal per editorial, while EKU editorials usually convey multiple aims.

To sum up, Kurdish and Chinese editorials in English electronic newspapers reporting are different in linguistical complexity units and quite similar regarding title types, editorial purposes, and identifying argumentative. There is a difference of units between Kurdish and Chines reporting methods such as, different words, paragraphs and etc. which created the difference in scores. Furthermore, different writers from different backgrounds are effective on the reporting newspapers. However, the similarities in those terms rose to the corpus which shared the similar context, and the corpus subjects mostly related with the political issues. Generally, in political issues they usually face a problem and the nature of their texts tend to become an argumentative rather than expository.

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In implication, the recent study improves the quality of editorial writings of Kurdish writers; it provides an option for further studies of linguistics between two other languages. Furthermore, the analysis of personal pronouns reveals the underlying ideology of Kurdish and Chinese languages.

4. CONCLUSION

Methodologies and finding in this study aimed to assist researchers, readers, and EJP/EFL students in both China and Kurdistan especially. First, the comparison of linguistically complex texts used as an alternative to the other studies that compare English to Kurdish and Chinese to English. Therefore, this method can be used for research between other languages. Furthermore, the analysis of personal pronouns reveals the underlying ideology of text in both Kurdish and Chinese. For EFL students, there is a mindful of syntactic difference between Kurdish and Chinese when it comes to English which may improve writing quality. Also, a topical analysis can be useful in explaining one text is more or less coherent than another, and knowledge of how editorials organize will enhance the reader's comprehension.

For EJP students, it's profitable to them to do a contrastive study to explore differences between their editorial writing and the professional native English and EFL Kurdish and Chinese students. The finding could be very helpful to discover the differences and similarities between them.

In conclusion, the findings of the research recognized as having important implications for research into EFL/EJP learners. The implications and validities of the findings are limited; therefore, the researcher needs further explanation with a large number of data and use of case studies in order to reveal their improvements in news articles. Moreover, contrastive analyses should be conducted with a border sample of editorials of genres such as laboratory reports and business correspondence of different kinds which could offer implications for EFL and English as specific purpose teaching, while other authentic texts such as magazine articles, sport news, advertising, and contrastive analysis between native English and non-native English speakers. The instruction could be practical for the teaching of ESL and EJP.

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