Contrastive Rhetoric Analysis of English and Persian News

Mohammdreza Sadeghi

Instructor, Malek Ashtar Technical University, Iran

universed2@gmail.com

Abstract

News has played a vital role in peoples' and governments' decision making. As such, the source and reliability of the news are of equal or even more significance than the news itself and that makes reporting the news a challenging and critical profession. Accordingly, investigating how news is reported is essential and further it would be illuminating to see how different news reporting organizations and cultures report their news for their readers. This study compared the Persian and English news to explore the similarities and differences between two languages. Utilizing Schematic Structure of Editorials (Based on van Dijk, 1992, 1995) to analyze the data, the researcher found significant similarities and differences between Persian and English in terms of genre of news.

Keywords: **News genre; Editorials; Schematic Structure of Editorials; English and Persian Languages**

Introduction

News has performed a critical role in peoples' and governments' decision making. Therefore, the source and reliability of the news is equal or even more critical than news itself. That is what really makes journalism and news reporting a challenging profession. Accordingly, it will be essential to investigating how news is reported and further it would be important to see how different news reporting organizations and cultures report their news for their readers. It is always a matter of importance to observe different versions of one news report in different languages and the way they are reported since it may show various perceptions or interpretations of journalists based on their political and socio-cultural environment. In addition, editorials, as journalism genre, are believed to play an important persuasive and argumentative role in the minds of readers.

To this end, one of the most important concepts related to the line of research in this field was Contrastive Rhetoric Analysis (CRA) first proposed by Robert Kaplan (1966) where he concentrates specifically on paragraph development. CRA proposed by Kaplan generally focuses on different aspects of writings particularly the expository dimensions of writings of English language learners (Kaplan, 1966). The ideas associated with this concept, as well, are supported and influenced by the weaker version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis called "linguistic relativity" theory which is a form of language determinism (Bonyadi, 2012).

The methods and techniques adopted in CRA, according to Kaplan (1966), are

dependent on the researchers' interest in the analysis of writing discourses with different languages and cultural backgrounds. Kaplan's initial ideas have been common in the studies in this area and they have been used and expanded by a large number of researchers (e.g. Connor, 1996, 1999; Van Dijk, 1988). For example, Van Dijk (1988) was one of the scholars who conducted the first studies on genres of journalistic texts in which a wide variety of media genres such as the textual features of the news reports were analyzed and explored in detail. Inspired by Kaplan (1966), van Dijk in his famous work *News as Discourse* (1988) takes an interdisciplinary approach, combining linguistic and discourse of news. There were also some other studies on media genres including genre studies by Bell (1991), Fairclough (1995), and Scollon (1998). These investigations have only looked at the textual features of news genres and there are no studies taking the CRA into account for the analysis of the properties of the genre of texts written by English writers against texts written by non-native ones.

To conduct studies by CRA, first of all, there is a need to know more about the term rhetoric and to clarify it. In the past decades, rhetoric has been regarded as an old art of argumentation and discourse (Swales, 1990) which originates from the Greek word *rhetor*. Kaplan (1966) defines rhetoric as: "… a mode of thinking or a mode of finding all available means for the achievement of a designated end ... Accordingly, rhetoric concerns itself basically with what goes on in the mind rather than what comes out of mouth". Rhetoric can also be defined as the art of discourse, an art that aims to improve the capability of writers or speakers to inform, persuade, or motivate particular audiences in specific situations (Corbett, 1990).

Background of the Problem
A number of studies have been conducted on contrastive rhetoric analysis (CRA) of the news. One of the first ones was done by

Dantas-Whitney and Grabe (1989) which investigated the textual features of the news editorials written by English and Portuguese writers and the way they rendered information. Their results showed that the English news writers are more formal than the Portuguese when they are writing the editorial news (Sabzevari & Sadeghi, 2012).

Connor (1996) explains the investigation of editorials in Finnish, English and German newspapers to figure out the strength and the location of the major claim in the editorial news, conducted by Tirkkonen-Condit and Lieflander-Kiostinen (1989). According to Connor (1996), they founded that the Finnish editorial writers did not offer a perspective but rather provided information, and also the German writers usually placed the main argument at the beginning more often than the English newspaper did, whereas Finish editorials had no argument statement.

In another study, Ansary (2004) investigated editorials by English native and non-native writers in three different cultural contexts (The USA, Iran, and Pakistan). He concluded that although the editorial writers had used different strategies to render the editorials and their relevant sections, the rhetorical organization of all had the same pattern. This finding verifies Bhatia (2004) where she mentions *genre* refers to language use in a conventionalized communicative setting in order to give expression to a specific set of communicative goals of a cultural or social institution, which give rise to stable structural organizations by imposing restrictions on the use of lexico-grammatical as well as discourses.

In another study, Bonyadi (2010) did a contrastive study of the editorials in New York Times and Tehran Times newspapers to reveal their schematic structures of the editorials. He identified three rhetorical moves in the editorials namely: The Introduction, The Body and The Ending. Then he concluded that the editorials from

both newspapers involved same sections; but their editorial writers used their own unique strategies to acquire the communicative purpose of the genre.

Babaee (2011) who has conducted a vast research on English and persian news editorials, mentions a few of most important empirical studies in this field including that of Hirose (2003) where he focuses on similarities and differences between students' L1 and L2 writing. Hirose (2003) conducted a study aiming at comparing Japanese L1 and L2 writing in terms of organizational patterns in argumentative writing. One of the consequences of the study demonstrated that most of the understudies utilized deductive sort of authoritative examples in both L1 and L2. This discovering appears to negate the early studies (Hinds, 1987) which backed the inductive written work of Japanese students.

According to Babaee (2011), in 2004, Fakhri, focusing on Arabic rhetoric, conducted a qualitative study tried to investigate rhetorical properties of Arabic articles which apply Swale's model. Swale's model tries to capture the main rhetorical patterns which are used in organizing the—introduction part in research articles (Swales, 1990). As for data, the study used 28 introductions of research articles published in a highly referred journal issued in Morocco. Results of the study indicated that: a) overall organization of introduction parts in Arabic articles was at variance with those of the Swale's model. That is, not all authors tried to justify their research and created a research space for their studies. The reason for this diversity is claimed to be the academic background of the authors (They were educated either in Arab or western universities), b) not all Arabic articles reviewed the previous research except for 1, 2 or 3 citations. To account for this absence of evaluation of previous researches, Fakhri attributed it to the unacceptability of argumentative style and self promotion in

the culture, c) likewise, in most of the introductions, not explicit statements about the structure of the article were given, and reinforcing the idea that Arabic language is a —reader responsible language. However, the presence of some of these statements in a few articles made the researcher claim that Arabic language was neither a reader responsible nor writer responsible but it is of hybrid nature, d) repetition and flowery expression is a common characteristic of Arabic prose. His findings verified the Kaplan's idea. Likewise, the study supports Koch's (1983) claim that argumentation in Arabic was done by repetition and paraphrasing of the arguments. Fakhri's study is of importance in that it not only described some of the organizational patterns of Arabic articles, but also accounted for the possible cultural origins of such rhetoric as well.

Another area in contrastive analysis was introduced by Thatcher (2004) through pushing contrastive rhetoric analysis and the Sapir-Whorf theory much further. She proposes that an excess of accentuation on the verbal medium as a proof for social and explanatory examples would contract the extent of the field. This view seems to open a new challenge for rhetoricians, as they might have to conduct new studies to understand how writing is treated in other media and cultures across the world (Babaee, 2011).

Bojana Petric (2005) conducted a study to assess the role of contrastive rhetoric in writing pedagogy. Specifically, the aim of the study was assessing the extent to which the students acquired culturally based elements of writing. 19 students participated in writing course. As for the method, the study used a variation of the single group pretest /post test method. The students took a test of writing ability on the first day of their study period. This was followed by a short writing course taught inclusively over six days. Her results revealed that though contrastive rhetoric studies about the first language patterns

may offer a sign of general tendencies, they should not be understood as a strong predictor of students' writing behavior in English. For its research question namely: —To what extent the dominant patterns of the native language interferes with the learning of a different patterns? The study found little evidence that the dominant native patterns stood in the way of learning a new writing pattern. The clear implication of this study was that the students need to be provided with a range of samples of a genre (Babaee, 2011).

2.2.1. Iranian Studies on Contrastive Rhetoric

As reviewed by Babaee (2011), going through these local studies, one can see that only certain rhetoric topics have been addressed by the papers including studies on: rhetorical organizations of one of Iran's famous poets, Khayyam, use of meta-discourse in Persian/English master theses, rhetorical features in advertising headlines and meta discourse in English/Persian research articles. In chronological order, this section reviews these studies and their findings. Investigating the rhetorical organization of the Robaiyat (quatrains) of Khayyam, one of the most famous Persian poets of the middle ages, Yarmohammadi (1995) conducted a research study to compare it with its English translation by Fitzgerald. He came to the conclusion that the rhetorical pattern of all Khayyam's Robaiyat included three elements including—description, recommendation, and reasoning. Based on his analysis, Yarmohammadi argued that the reason for Fitzgerald's successful translation of Khayyam's Robaiyat is that he managed to reconstruct the same rhetorical patterns in English and then applied appropriate sentence structures and lexis.

Babaei (2011) continues to mention other notable works in this field including a contrastive study on the use of meta-discourse done by Marandi (2003). The study investigated the use of meta-discourse

in Persian/English masters theses among three groups namely native speakers of Persian (Iranian), non-native speakers of English (Iranian) and native speakers of English. Drawing on a revised taxonomy of meta-discourse put forward by Crismore, Markkanen and Steffensen (1993), the study compared only two sections of the theses, introductions and discussions, to find out the amount and types of different meta-discourse used throughout the sections. Based on the results of the study, each one of these groups used meta-discourses such as connectives, hedges, attributors and persona markers in different ways. She further made conclusion that native speakers of Persian used connectives much more frequently than native speakers of English. Nonnative speakers of English used fewer connectives in their introduction than in discussion.

Khodabandeh (2007) investigated the application of rhetorical features in advertising headlines of English and Persian languages to uncover the extent of compatibility of the two languages in these domains. To carry out the comparison between the advertisements, she randomly selected a sample of 100 English and 100 Persian display ads from among a larger corpus of 300 English and 300 Persian ads. The data analysis was conducted in three stages. In the first stage, a detailed description of the advertising headlines at rhetorical features was done to see the similarities and differences between the two languages in these domains. In the second stage, the stylistic features of slogans were analyzed within and across the two languages and in the third level, the discourse features of advertisement of the two languages were taken into consideration. Results of this study showed that the difference between the English and Persian advertisements was in the frequency of some rhetorical figures, that is, —some rhetorical figures had a higher frequency in one language but not in the other (p. 60). These differences further

revealed that each language preferred specific devices. This preference, she claimed, might be due to various factors such as cultural or personal differences (Babaee, 2011).

Babaee (2011) adds that Zarei and Mansoori (2007) in a study investigated the use of meta-discourse resources in English and Persian research articles. They used a corpus consisting of 19 articles (9 English and 10 Persian articles). The results of the study revealed that Persian writers of research articles relatively preferred to outperform their English counterparts by using more meta-discourse elements. Furthermore, they argued that in comparison with Persian, English academic genres were reader responsible.

Statement of the Problem

Considering that almost most languages differ in phonology, morphology and grammar, for many years, language educators focused on these matters aiming that the students might be able to use language effectively if they are armed with these features (Enkvist, 1997). Kaplan (2001) later added that discourse is not simply a collection of correct syntactic structures, but rather represents a complex multi-facial, multidimensional set. It was further found out that rhetorical patterns and strategies, as a sub-component of this complex set, are socially constructed and transmitted. As an essential part of language, these rhetorical structures and strategies might differ between languages and cultures. In particular, one of the factors, among the others, which indicate this complex nature of discourse, is the manner in which ideas are presented and organized in a piece of text. In other words, different languages may use different conventions for creating a written text. Getting general knowledge of these written conventions in each language will provide a framework for analyzing the text

arrangement. These conventions at the same time will reveal the cultural preferences in organization of thought. Inappropriate use of these conventions; however, is sometimes the source of problems in creating a written text (Babaee, 2011).

Of course, as long as EFL students are within the cultural framework of their audience, there would be no problems in understanding the written text by the audience, but —when the cultural frame, as well as the language structure, differs between the writer and the audience, the interaction between reader and text and the conceptualization of the notions conveyed, may be skewed (Bliss, 2001). The use of these L1 writing conventions in a different language results in a written text full of discrete bits of information that seem disconnected and even unrelated to the topic in the eyes of a native speaker (Bliss, 2001). EFL writers, as a result, find their written work either not understood or not accepted.

Thus, how writers in two different languages achieve their social purposes, persuasion in the case of this present study, and how they manipulate the topics and their readers' understanding by using different linguistic devices are issues that need to be explored (Babaee, 2011).

Significance of the Problem

There are various reasons why the study of newspaper editorials could be considered significant as a discourse genre in contrastive rhetoric and EFL studies. First of all they are persuasive and argumentative in nature. This means that unlike news reports, editorials are written in an effort to influence the social cognition of their readers; trying to reproduce their own attitudes and ideologies among the public at large (Van Dijk, 1992). They are at the same time supposed to present evaluations and comments about the news events. Obviously some expert classifications may

have generally acknowledged conventions particularly in terms of their general structures. Then again, regarding the matter of utilizing the methodologies of influence and argumentation in a genre like daily paper article one ought not to reject the part of socio-cultural elements that may impact it. In this way, any push to investigate the diverse acknowledge of these systems in the two languages would add to the field. Furthermore, certain attributes of daily papers have supported the utilization of newspaper language as input to language instructing materials.

In particular, According to Connor (1999), editorials would reflect national styles in regards to states of mind of influence more than other composition styles. In other words, they set the standard for written persuasion in a language. Being so, they can be used as a resource to write academic argumentative and persuasive essays.

As a public discourse, editorials can influence the students' academic writing. Through outlining intriguing classroom exercises taking into account editorials, it is conceivable to furnish students with learning on the rationale of the thoughts and the association and additionally improvement of the contentions in the editorials. This would thus change the understudies into discriminating readers and writers who have the capacity to find some hidden meaning of a daily paper and to evaluate stories for their peculiarities.

Along these lines, any study that endeavors to furnish EFL understudies with nonexclusive attributes of the publications will make them prepared to make utilization of daily paper editorials in the classrooms. Regarding the above-mentioned functions of the newspaper editorials, one is expected to find considerable literature on their role.

Purpose of the Study
This study intends to scrutinize the comparative study of genre of news, in English and Persian langugaes. This issue

has not been sufficiently investigated. Thus, the present research is seeking to shed light on the some aspects in terms of similarities and differences between news genre in Persian and English.

Thus, the present study will be an attempt to answer the following questions:
Q1. Regarding the genre of news, are there any similarity and difference between Persian and English languages?
Q2. What are the most frequent translation techniques used by Iranian news agencies?

Theoretical Framework
A number of theoretical frameworks were chosen for this study based on their function in similar works. A minimum unit of rhetorical analysis named "triad" was proposed by Bolivar (1994) in three modes of Lead, Follow and Valuate. Lead introduces the topic, Follow elaborates and Valuate comments and draws conclusion on the argument or the viewpoint of the writer (Sabzevari & Sadeghi 2012). Nonetheless, two Iranian researchers (Riazi and Assar, 2001) used this model on the editorials written in Persian in Iranian daily papers. Their study demonstrated that the same units of cooperation in particular Lead, Follow and Valuate existed in those editorials.

In another study, Ansary (2004) compared editorials written by native and non-native writers of English in three different cultural contexts. Though the writers had used various strategies to create the editorials and the consisting sections of those, the rhetorical organization of all followed the same pattern. This would confirm Bhatia (2004) where he mentions *genre* refers to language use in a conventionalized communicative setting in order to give expression to a specific set of communicative goals. Genre it still follows some generic features which are observed universally; the realizations of the constituents of the text might be different and the strategies for writing each could be different from one writer to another, but the

communicative purpose of each part of the text and the overall communicative purpose are the same.

In a more recent study Katajamaki and Koskela (2006) used Van Dijk's model of rhetorical structure to analyze editorials in three business newspapers in English, Swedish and Finnish. They found that there are three common rhetorical moves in the genre of editorials in the three languages: The Introduction section, the intermediate section and the coda. Moreover, their results revealed that the stages involved in each section could be different and drafted in different ways.

Methodology
Corpus of the Study
Focusing on the rhetorical analysis of news editorials, English and Persian newspaper websites seem to be a suitable resource. In this case, 100 news editorials of English and Persian newspapers will be taken from the websites of four newspapers from 2014 to 2015. All news editorials would be taken from the international news sections of the websites. Both English and Persian extracts will be checked to have been written by native writers of the languages respectively.

Materials
Qualitative research methodology has been employed in the present study due to the nature of the study and certain characteristics that are associated with qualitative research methods. Working with texts, dealing with the natural setting of the phenomenon, viewing the social phenomenon from an insider's perspective, focusing on a smaller sample and having an interpretive nature are the major characteristics of this method (Dornyei, 2007). Furthermore to describe and analyze the data, the present study will apply Content analysis, Discourse analysis and Rhetorical analysis. One of the main

characteristics of this research method is that it usually works with various types of texts such as field notes, journals and documents with the aim of capturing rich and complex details of the research phenomenon. Secondly, in an effort to describe the phenomenon as it occurs naturally, this method tries to preserve the natural setting avoiding manipulating the situation under study. Selinger and Shohamy (1990) elaborated on this issue as follows: "Qualitative methods originally developed from the methodologies of field anthropologists and sociologists concerned with studying human behavior within the context in which that behavior would occur naturally and in which the role of the researcher would not affect the normal behavior of the subjects". Thirdly, the qualitative research method tries to view social phenomenon from —the perspective of insiders (Dornyei, 2007). That is, it is concerned with feelings of the individual with the aim of understanding the participants' view of the situation being studied. In the same vein, Punch (2005) has indicated that the basic characteristic of qualitative research is the idea that human behavior is based on meaning which people attribute to a situation. Fourthly, qualitative studies make use of smaller samples of participants trying to get as much information as possible about the phenomenon. Finally, being interpretive is the last characteristic of this research method. This means that the results of the study can be the product of the researcher's subjective interpretation of the data. Thus, considering both the above-mentioned characteristics of the qualitative studies and the subject-matter of the present study, which is comparing the rhetorical features of newspaper editorials in English and Persian, it is quite logical to employ this method in this study.

Procedures

The researcher did the followings to conduct the study and analyze the data:

1. Collecting theoretical and empirical studies that have to do with the topic.

2. Writing the questions and hypothesis of the study.

3. Collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data. In such doing, the researcher gathered 100 news editorials, as the genre, from four English and Persian newspapers, taken from the websites of the newspapers from 2014 to 2015. All news editorials would be taken from the international news sections of the websites. As for the Iranian newspapers, the researcher is sure they are all written by Iranian journalists so that the genres taken from them would all be homogeneous and written by Iranians. The English newspaper reports are also checked and they all sound English so it can be claimed that the genres in both groups are written by English and Iranian news writers. The researcher, using contrastive rhetoric and genre analysis methodologies, then will analyze the editorials in terms of the organization of the rhetorical structure of the texts and the ways events and people are reported in order to find possible similarities or differences.

4. Regarding the second question of the study which states whether Iranian English newspapers are influenced by their native counterparts, the researcher will randomly gather 25 editorials from Tehran Times and compare them with New York Times to grasp any noticeable impact on the part of native English newspapers. Here the rhetorical impacts which stem from ideological factors and affect the editor's (translator's) mind will be the focus.

5. Presenting the results by using tables each of which is followed by describing the results and the most important findings.

6. Drawing the main findings and conclusions, discussing them and presenting recommendations for further research.

Data Analysis

In the present study, an editorial is considered a kind of newspaper discourse that gives the opinion of the editor or publisher on a topic or item of news‖ (Sinclair, 1995).The structure of editorials is different from that of news reports to which they refer (van Dijk, 1988). Specifically, editorials usually have a :

- fixed place in the paper
- special type or page layout
- typical header

The research tried to identify the schematic structures of the editorials based on the theoretical classification proposed by van Dijk (1985, 1992, 1995).He speculated that each discourse type may have certain frames to express the content, and the schemata of a certain genre might be realized differently in different languages. Thus, using a suggested schematic structure of editorials the present study aimed to explore the similarities and differences and find out if editorials in two languages fit or do not fit the proposed structure in terms of their schemata.

Table 1. *Schematic Structure of Editorials (Based on van Dijk, 1992, 1995)*

Text Part	Function
Definition	Summarizing the event
Evaluation	Providing the evaluation of the event
Conclusion	Giving recommendation Giving advice Giving warning

Furthermore, a textual analysis will be carried out based on the framework proposed by Richardson (2007) as presented below:

The textual analysis was carried out based on certain syntactic and semantic categories in relation to actual newspaper discourse. As Figure.1 suggested, at the syntactic level we dealt with categories like parallelism, transitivity and modality.
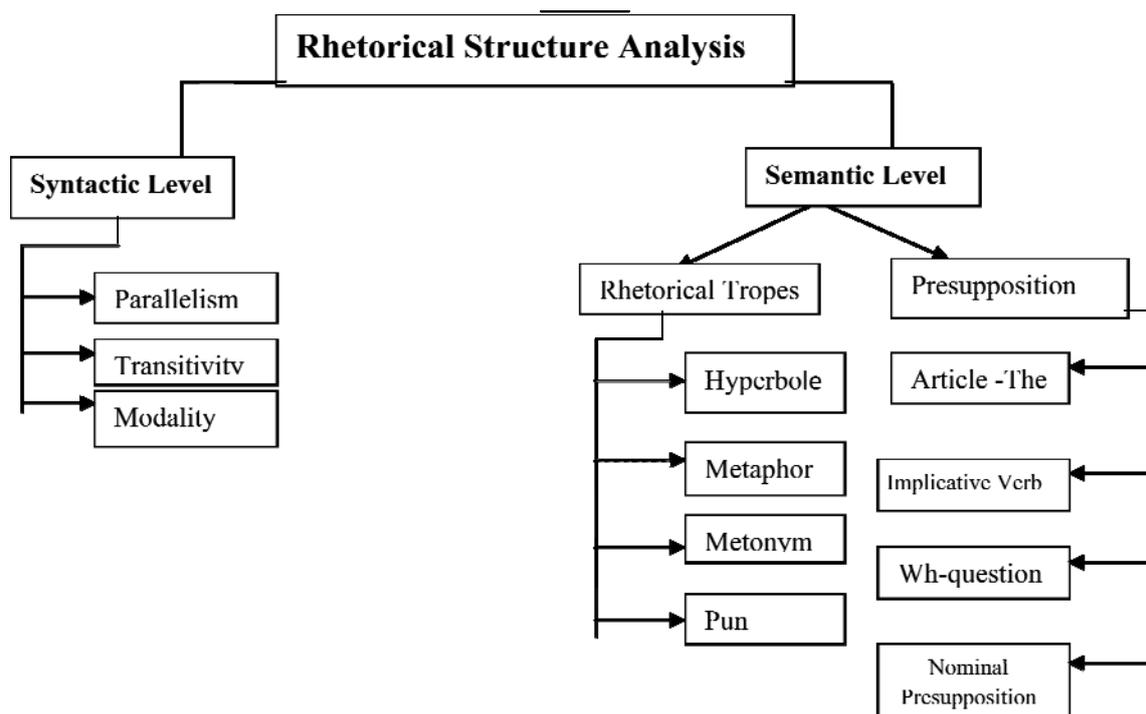
Results and Conclusion

The analysis of the selected editorials revealed some important quantitative/ qualitative similarities and differences between the selected editorials in terms of the schematic structures and textual/ rhetorical devices employed in both the headlines and the editorials' main texts.

Referring to the first research question the study revealed that the editorial writers organized the content through three basic schematic structures namely *The Introduction*, *The Body* and *The Ending*. Each of these schematic structures in the editorials then followed certain *moves*. Two distinct moves, *Orientation* (OR) and *Criticism* (CR) were identified in the first schematic structure. *Developing* and *Conclusion* were identified as the other moves employed in the second and the third schematic structures, respectively. The occurrence of the same schematic structures and the same moves in the editorials of the Persian and English editorials revealed that specialist writers in cross-cultural settings were consistent in the way they organized their overall messages in a certain genre, editorials of criticism.

However, the following differences were identified in the first schematic structure of the selected editorials between the Persian and English editorials:

- The (OR) move in the English editorials were found to be much more evaluative that those of Persian editorials. That is, to orient their readers with the topic, the English editorial writers used more evaluative words and phrases.

- The English editorial writers used a *reader responsible* rhetoric. That is, they communicated little amount of information through the (OR) move and even skipped the move much more frequently than Persian editorial writers.

- With reference to the second schematic structure, The Body, both Persian and English editorials developed the topics using either *Lead-Follow-Valuate* (LFV) or *Lead-Valuate* (LV) patterns. However, both were found to be inconsistent in treating the respective move, *Developing*, in this section. The following points were identified as the major differences between the two editorials.

- *Turns*- Lead, Follow, Valuate- were found to be comparatively fully developed in the

Persian editorials of while they comprised short sentences in those of the English's.

- English editorial writers included more subtopics in the editorials providing more support for the editorials' main topic.

- English editorial writers used the first person plural, *We*, in this section of the editorials that might be attributed to their desire to give a sense of authority and credibility to the paper.

- English editorial writers used the valuate turns in this section mainly for giving *directive suggestions* rather than *comments*.

Through the third schematic section of the editorials, The Ending, the editorial writers in the both editorials tried to conclude the topic using certain rhetorical strategies. The *Conclusion* move in this section of the editorials was realized differently in the editorials. The following features were identified as the main differences between the Persian and English editorials.

- The English editorial writers concluded the topic through mainly employing *informative comments* and *predictive statements*. This revealed the writers' desire to *interpret* and *comment* on the news events which might be culturally attributed to the importance of *interpretation* in society.

- The conclusion move in the English editorials was realized through expressing *necessity* and making *suggestions*. This might be culturally attributed to the influential role of the media that has enabled them to identify the necessities and put forward the suggestions.

In general, the socio-cultural differences are unlikely to affect the basic schematic structures of the editorials. However, they might have implications for realization of certain rhetorical patterns such as employing evaluative rhetoric, directive statements, rhetorical questions and other patterns.

Regarding the second research question, the most frequent translation techniques by Iranian news agencies, the present study revealed that at both *sentence level* and *lexical choice* the most frequent translation techniques include Modulation, Compensation, Literal translation, Discursive Creation, Calque and Substitution.

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