

Syntactic Patterns of News Headlines in Philippine and American Newspapers

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ABSTRACT

Linguistic and rhetorical patterns of texts are intertwined with writers' socio-cultural backgrounds. The study explored the syntactic patterns of news headlines in Philippine and American newspapers. Specifically, it examined the grammatical patterns and cohesive conjunctions commonly employed by news writers; the contrastive analysis on the use of cohesive conjunctions in long headlines; and the cultural practices reflected in headline writing. Descriptive research design was utilized in the study. Data analyzed were 30 news headlines obtained from the online edition of six leading newspapers from the two countries published daily from August 15-21, 2015. Frequency counts and percentage were employed to quantify the frequency of occurrence of the patterns. Results revealed that S-V-O emerged as the commonly employed syntactic pattern by Filipino and American writers. It is frequently applied either in simple sentences or multiple sentences. The rhetorical pattern of the two speech communities regarding cohesive conjunctions is built on the adversative. Comparatively, 'but'

is the adversative cohesive conjunctions commonly used. Similarities of the commonly used grammatical structure existed in the two nationalities as reflected in the writing of news headlines. In contrast, S-V-C pattern was employed in American headlines while the additive 'and' was used in Philippine headlines. Thus, Philippine and American headlines manifest parallelism in commonly used syntactic patterns and cohesive conjunctions but have distinct differences in other grammatical aspects.

Keywords – Linguistics, syntactic patterns, news headlines, newspapers, descriptive research design, Batac City, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Research on contrastive rhetoric initially focused on the field of expository essays of second language (L2) learners for the identification of writing problems caused by first language (L1) specific rhetorical strategies. Since its introduction in the 1960s, it has undergone dynamic changes from English language teaching to different researchable areas outside the classroom such as business letters, editorials, and headlines.

As a scholarly discipline, contrastive rhetorical analysis assumes that culture-specific organizational patterns are displayed in different literary traditions. It includes the selection of linguistic and structural units aimed at producing an effect on an audience. It asserts that rhetoric is adaptable to the functions and operations of language that L2 learners acquire in school, many of which are relatively embedded in the culture of people.

Tabula & Salasac (2015) presupposed that language is intimately and dynamically intertwined with culture. Connor (1996), on the other hand, premised that culture is interwoven within the texts written in different linguistic backgrounds. In essence, culture has its own distinct structures and rhetorical patterns. Kachru (1981) continuously emphasized the role that culture plays in the development of writing. Accordingly, linguistic and rhetorical patterns in discourse are produced and interpreted in the context of culture.

Relating to the preceding point, Leki (1991) stated that it is irrefutable that contrastive rhetoric has had an impact on research on writing across culture, and on the teaching of English to speakers of other languages. One particular focus of contrastive rhetoric nowadays is in line with news headlines. However, previous studies on the grammatical features of news headlines have not attempted to explore the syntactic patterns of news headlines focusing on clause types and cohesive conjunctions. Hence, the need for this study prompted the researchers

to uncover the syntactic features of news headlines in Philippine and American newspapers.

A newspaper headline is a text that indicates the nature of the article it introduces. Koosha and Shams (2005) premised that headlines demonstrate the most prominent and significant information of the news story. Parallel to this, Van Dijk (1998) asserted that headline shapes the summary of the news article, which strategically serves as the expression of its macrostructure. It describes the essence of a complicated news story in a few words (Ungerer, 2000).

According to Ludwig (2005), the best headlines both tell and sell, that is, they tell the reader quickly what the news is and persuade the reader that the story is worth reading. The intention of headlines is to draw swiftly and concisely an attention to the story usually read first; and the information expressed is used strategically by the editors or headline writers. It guides the reader in helping them decide whether to continue reading the whole report or to skip skimming the text onto another one.

The headlines' primary goal is to articulate ideas by using as few words as possible without causing misleading and misinterpretation on the headlines' semantics. Hence, a good newspaper headline as mentioned by Koosha and Shams (2005) in their study, should define the overall coherence or semantic unity of discourse and persuade its readers to devote time to reading.

Khodabandeh (2005) contrasted a one-week corpus of newspaper headlines of English and Persian languages to determine the major similarities and differences between them. The variability of syntactic and lexical features across and within the headlines of the two cultures was analyzed contrastively. Results indicated that headlines of both newspapers were similar in the use of dynamic verbs, active voice, short words, declarative sentences, finite clauses and simple sentences, but significantly different in the usage of tense forms, headline types, modification and omission of words.

In the same vein, Roohani and Esmaili (2010) conducted a contrastive study to characterize the linguistic structures of sports headlines in English and Iranian newspapers. Applying contrastive analysis, the researchers examined the variability of syntactic and lexical patterns across and within the three week corpus of sports headlines in both newspapers. It was concluded that the sports headlines of English and Iranian languages resembled in using type of verb, headline types, voice, tense, and functional types. However, it was found that they differed in the quantitative use of predication, modification, noun and exclamation headlines.

Acknowledging these contributions of contrastive research toward the understanding of headlines, Lee (2012) also explored the similarities and differences of American and Korean political news headlines. He investigated how

extra-linguistic factors influenced the composition of news headlines between writers of different linguistic and cultural environments. Results revealed that the two sets of headlines display a similarity regarding the variety of structural patterns they deploy. Nevertheless, it was discovered that differences exist in the tense or aspect of sentences, length of the headlines, uses of complex noun phrases, and naming practice. The differences identified could be attributed to the considerations of the readers' interests, and the conventions practiced within the relevant linguistic and cultural communities.

In a contrastive study of Bonyadi and Samuel (2013) about headlines in newspaper editorials, the researchers did a contrastive textual analysis of selected headlines, culled from the editorials of the English newspaper, *The New York Times*, and those of Persian newspaper, *Tehran Times*. Their study aimed at exploring the kinds of textual and rhetorical strategies the two newspapers used for propagating their preferred ideologies. From the findings, the researchers concluded that headlines in the two papers presented a subjective attitude of the writers toward the topic. However, based on the analysis of the data, it became clear that there were certain differences between the two sets of headlines regarding presupposition and certain rhetorical devices.

Through these, the present study attempted to explore the syntactic patterns of news headlines written by Filipino and American news writers. Specifically, it purported to analyze the grammatical patterns and cohesive conjunctions commonly used by local and foreign news writers. It also endeavoured to determine the comparative use of cohesive conjunctions and the cultural practices reflected in the writing of news headlines.

Undoubtedly, the two cultures involved in this study have historical connection and relationship. History speaks that the Philippines was once colonized by the Americans in 1898, introducing education to the Filipinos through the so-called Thomasites, first American public school teachers in the country, who paved the way to learn a new language, that is, English. Besides learning the language for Filipinos becomes easy, but in the process of acquiring it, there were differences on the way Filipinos used it from the way Americans do.

Therefore, from such an analysis in this study of news headlines, similarities and differences between these two cultures can be highlighted.

FRAMEWORK

The succeeding concepts and theories have stimulated the researchers to undergo this study. In a contrastive rhetoric undertaken by Mohamed and Omer (2000), they focused on the direct effect of cultural differences in rhetorical

organization between Arabic and English. Their findings showed that the Arabic rhetorical pattern is context-based, generalized, repetition-oriented and additive, because of its having a collectivist, high-context, high-contact and reader-responsible culture. On the contrary, English rhetorical pattern is text-based, specific, change-oriented and non-additive due to its being an individualist, low-context, low-contact and writer-responsible culture.

Relatedly, Genuino (2002) investigated cohesion as a revelation of cultural practices. From 30 selected articles analyzed, results revealed that the rhetorical pattern of the three communities (Singapore, the Philippines, and the U.S.) in the genre examined were built on adversative relations. Moreover, cohesive devices occupied three positions in discourse, that is, within the sentence, between sentences, and between paragraphs. Structural and semantic relations were also identified.

With regard grammar and its structures, there are two basic types of headlines in terms of their structures, the sentential and non-sentential headlines. The first type refers to all headlines that have a regular sentence structure, that is, all headlines with a subject and a finite verb phrase. The second type of headline structure is non-sentential. This structure is lower than a regular sentence; it is constructed in an irregular way. In this present study, the sentential type of news headlines was considered.

According to Crystal (2004), as far as sentence structure is concerned, there are two main types of sentence – simple and multiple sentences. Simple sentences consist of just one independent clause. Consistently, when it is analysed, there is just one subject and one finite verb phrase. Quirk, Sidney, Leech and Svartvik (1985) distinguished these clause types as Subject-Verb, Subject-Verb-Object, Subject-Verb-Complement, Subject-Verb-Adverbial, Subject-Verb-Object-Object, Subject-Verb-Object-Complement, and Subject-Verb-Object-Adverbial. Multiple sentences, on the other hand, have two or more clauses that are linked either by coordination or by subordination.

Additionally, Jakobson's (1959) theory of linguistic approach to translation, later developed by Robinson (2004), was utilized in this study. The written texts were compared with reference to the observable discourse-sensitive linguistic forms (e.g. grammatical structure and cohesive conjunctions), on the assumption that differences at this level reflect differences at the culturally-coded rhetorical level of text organization.

The concept of cohesion according to Halliday & Hasan (1976) likewise shaped the framework of this study. They explained that conjunctive relations were encoded not in the form of grammatical structures but in the looser more pliable form of linkages between the components in a text. They identified

four categories of conjunctions based on cohesive relations namely: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal.

Contrastive rhetoric has been used to analyze countless genres of writing such as business reports, job application letters, and grant proposals to mention a few. News writing genre has become one of the most intriguing research areas on cross-cultural differences in writing. Conducting this present study would somehow delve and determine whether ESL readers would be much guided if they have awareness of the rhetorical differences in news headlines cross-culturally, to extend further their comprehension and become more open-minded with their expectations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to examine the grammatical syntactic feature used by Philippine and American news writers in constructing news headlines. Specifically, it analyzed the grammatical patterns and cohesive conjunctions commonly used by local and foreign news writers. It also ascertained the points of comparison on the use of cohesive conjunctions in news headlines and the cultural practices reflected in the writing of news headlines.

METHODOLOGY

Research Setting

The contrastive rhetorical analysis of the news headlines was conducted during the First Semester of the Academic Year 2015-2016 at the Mariano Marcos State University, Batac City, Philippines. The research site holds the distinctions as National University of Agriculture and Fisheries Education, and Higher Education Regional Research Center. It is an ISO 9001:2008 certified institution. Also, it is the third state university in the Philippines that was granted with institutional accreditation status by the Accrediting Agencies of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines.

Since the data collection involved the use of internet, the university's College of Arts and Sciences served as the venue for the whole duration of the study because it provides the fastest and widest hotspot connectivity. The researchers, being members of the same agency, utilized the CAS Department of Languages and Literature for other activities about the study.

Research Design

The descriptive research design was utilized in this study. The design was used predominantly in describing a phenomenon. It attempts to find out existing relationships among variables to develop some generalizations. Inevitably, this is the design of choice to meet the objectives of the study at exploring the grammatical patterns and the cohesive conjunctions commonly employed in news headlines across and within two speaking communities.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of research were applied in the study. The coded portions of the headlines were counted to determine the most commonly used grammatical structures and cohesive conjunctions between Filipino and American news writers. On the other hand, textual analysis was used to ascertain the parallelism and cultural practices in the writing of news headlines between the two cultures.

Research Instrument

News article headlines from the different national and international newspapers served as the corpora of the study. Thirty news headlines were obtained from the online edition of six leading newspapers in the Philippines (Philippine Daily Inquirer, Philippine Star, and Manila Bulletin) and in the United States (USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times). These sources of data were published daily from August 15-21, 2015.

The selection of the newspapers was based on ranking that was surveyed by the 2015 Newspaper Web Ranking. According to the survey, these newspapers emerged as the top three highest regarding readership in the two countries, respectively.

USA Today has the distinction of having the widest circulation of newspaper in America since 2003. It is a daily middle-market newspaper founded on September 15, 1982 and published by the Gannett Company. The Wall Street Journal emphasizes business and economic views. It is a New York-based international daily newspaper published by Dow Jones & Company. The New York Times is an American daily newspaper with 117 Pulitzer Prizes. It is published by the New York Times Company since September 18, 1851.

The Philippine Daily Inquirer is a member of the Asia News Network and the most widely read broadsheet newspaper in the Philippines. The Philippine Star is the country's leading print and digital newspaper. It is flagship brand of the Star Group of Publications which also publishes daily tabloids and weekly magazine. The Manila Bulletin is one of the largest broadsheet newspaper, which bills itself as "the Philippines' Leading National Newspaper."

The Classifications of Clause by Quirk et al. (1985) was adopted to examine the grammatical syntactic features of news article headlines written by Filipino and American writers. Meanwhile, Halliday and Hasan's (1976) Categories of Cohesive Conjunctions served as an instrument in analyzing and identifying the commonly used cohesive conjunctions by both writers of different social and linguistic backgrounds.

Treatment of Data

Out of the 30 news headlines used in this study, five headlines were purposively selected from each of the six leading newspapers. Thus, a total of 15 Philippines news headlines and 15 American news headlines were considered as samples.

Though there are two kinds of news headlines (sentential and non-sentential), all headlines included in the corpus were categorized as sentential according to their structure. They were coded based on the syntactic or sentence structures or patterns used within the headlines, that is, S-V; S-V-O; S-V-C; S-V-A; S-V-O-O; S-V-O-C; and S-V-O-A. In like manner, the cohesive conjunctions used within the headlines were underlined. Then they were coded based on the cohesive relations they implied within the headlines, that is, ADD if additive; ADV if adversative; CAU if causal; and TEM if temporal.

To determine the frequency of occurrence of the syntactic patterns of news headlines and commonly used cohesive conjunctions, frequency counts and percentages were utilized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Each news headline was analyzed to identify its linguistic features that include grammatical structures and cohesive conjunctions. As regards the grammatical structures, this study focused only on the sentential headlines considering the two main types of sentence structure introduced by Crystal (2004).

Commonly Employed Grammatical Patterns

Table 1 presents the grammatical patterns commonly employed in Philippine and American news headlines. It also summarizes the frequency of occurrences and percentage counts of grammatical patterns in the headlines.

Results reveal that among the 30 news headlines, 23 headlines were classified as those with the simple sentence structure while there were seven (7) headlines categorized as multiple sentences, specifically compound sentences.

Table 1. Grammatical patterns commonly employed in Philippine and American Headlines

Sentence Structure	Grammatical Patterns	Philippine Headlines		American Headlines		Total	
		F	%	f	%	F	%
Simple	S-V-O	9	60.00	8	53.33	17	56.67
	S-V	4	26.66	1	6.67	5	16.67
	S-V-C	0	0	1	6.67	1	3.33
	Total	13	86.67	10	66.67	23	76.67
Multiple	S-V-O	1	6.67	5	33.33	6	20.00
	S-V	1	6.67	0	0	1	3.33
	Total	2	13.33	5	33.33	7	23.33
GRAND TOTAL		15	50.00	15	50.00	30	100.00

Concerning the grammatical patterns, the most frequent type, as reflected in Table 1, was S-V-O comprising nine (9) or 60% occurrences in Philippine headlines while eight (8) or 53.33% in American headline. The following headlines can serve as examples of headlines having the S-V-O structure: PAGASA watches 2 tropical storms outside PAR (PS) (where PAGASA is the subject, watches is the verb (transitive verb) and 2 tropical storms outside PAR is the object (direct object), or Police release sketch of Bangkok bombing suspect (UT) (Police is the subject, release is the verb (transitive verb), and sketch of Bangkok bombing suspect is the object (direct object). It could be inferred that Philippine and American headline writers favor the S-V-O pattern because it describes in the best suitable way “who did what”. This implies the subject is always present. This finding supports the premise of Koosha & Shams (2005) that the most prominent and significant information of the news story is demonstrated when stated in few and simple terms

The second most frequently used structure of headlines was S-V with four (4) or 26.66% occurrences in Philippine headlines whereas only one (1) or 6.67% in an American headline. The headline China moves to contain cyanide after blasts kill 114 (MB), for example, consist just a subject (China) and a verb (intransitive verb) moves. The least frequently used structure was S-V-C with one (1) or 6.67% occurrence in American headline but it was not used in Philippine headline. An example of the SVC structure could be Red Pandas are Adorable and in Trouble (NYT), where Red Pandas is the subject, are is the verb (linking verb) and adorable and in trouble is the complement. This result seems parallel

to the finding of Khodabandeh (2005) that English and Persian newspapers are similar in the use of simple sentences but significantly different in the usage of headline types.

As further indicated in Table 1, there were seven (7) headlines identified as headlines with a regular multiple sentence structure. Among the analyzed headlines, there were just seven (7) examples of compound headlines, namely SBP welcomes Pingris' change of heart but leaves decision to Tab (PS), which is an example of a compound sentence with two clauses that can individually stand alone as independent simple sentences. The given sentence has a coordinator "but" which link the two clauses. The most frequently employed structure in a compound headline was S-V-O constituting one (1) or 6.67% occurrences in Philippine headlines just like the aforementioned sentence example, whereas, five (5) or 33.33% in American headlines. On the other hand, the second commonly used structure was S-V with one (1) or 6.67% occurrence in a Philippine headline; however, it was not employed in American headlines. No complex sentences were identified in the 30 news headlines. The non-occurrence of complex sentence in Philippine and American news headlines could be attributed to the tenet of Ungerer (2000) that news headlines describes the essence of a complicated news story in a few words.

Commonly Used Cohesive Conjunctions

Table 2 reveals the types of cohesive conjunctions commonly employed by the two speech communities in the headlines examined. It likewise recapitulates the frequency occurrences and percentage counts of the conjunctions in the headlines.

Table 2. Types of cohesive conjunctions commonly employed in Philippine and American Headlines

Sentence Structure Grammatical Patterns		Philippine Headlines		American Headlines		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
Additive	S-V-O	1	33.33	0	0	1	14.29
And	Total	1	33.33	0	0	1	14.29
Adversative	S-V-O	2	66.67	4	100	6	85.71
But	Total	2	66.67	4	100	6	85.71
GRAND TOTAL		3	42.86	4	57.14	7	100.00

As reflected in Table 2, in all the 30 news headlines analyzed, adversative conjunctions were the most commonly employed in the headlines, constituting 85.71% of the total cohesive devices identified in the headlines. Additive conjunctions were the next frequently used conjunctions, accounting for 14.29% of the total. No causal and temporal conjunctions were identified in the 30 news headlines. This result is consistent with the findings of Mohamed & Omer (2000) that the rhetorical organization of Arabic narrative texts is additive while the English rhetorical pattern is non-additive. Complementary to this finding is Roohani & Esmaeili's (2010) conclusion on sports headlines in English and Persian newspapers that resembled in using headline types but differed in predication and modification.

Among the adversative, 'but' was the most commonly used by the two speech communities, comprising four (4) or 100% of the total number of adversative conjunctions in American Headlines while two (2) or 66.67% in Philippine Headlines. Among the additives, the simple conjunction "and" was the most commonly employed constituting one (1) or 33.33% of the total number in Philippine headline, thus, proving that it was not employed in American headlines. This finding conforms to the result of the study of Genuino (2002) that the rhetorical pattern of the genre analysed from the articles of the Philippines, Singapore and the United States was built on the adversative relations.

Points of Comparison of Some Cohesive Conjunctions Used

It was found that the adversative conjunction but is parallel to both Philippine and American news headlines. This means that local and foreign news writers use similar cohesive conjunctions in constructing a headline with multiple sentences. As Lee (2012) stated in his study on American and Korean political news headlines, the two sets of headlines reflect a parallelism regarding the variety of structural pattern they deploy. This cohesive conjunction is evident in the following headlines:

Phil H: SBP welcomes Pingris' change of heart but leaves decision to Tab (PS)
 Am H: Slovakia will take in 200 Syrian refugees, but they have to be Christian (WSJ)

In the excerpt, but connects two clauses: SBP welcomes Pingris; change of heart and leaves decision to Tab. Also, Slovakia will take in 200 Syrian refugees, and they have to be Christian. Though but connects two clauses within the sentence, it establishes adversative cohesive relations suggesting the meaning "contrary to expectations" since the second clause functions "contrary to expectations" where the expectation may be derived from the content of what is being said of from

the communication process – the speaker- hearer situation (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Presence or Absence of Cultural Practices Reflected in the News Headlines Writing

Results revealed that there are similarities of the two speech communities regarding cultural practices as reflected in the writing of news headlines. To name a few, it is evidently seen that the commonly employed grammatical structure by Filipino and American news headline writers was S-V-O pattern. Moreover, the two countries prefer simple type of sentence in constructing a news headline. Despite the fact that there were commonalities, there were also differences. For instance, S-V-C pattern was not employed in Philippine headlines while the additive “and” was used in American, but not in Philippine headlines.

Some major findings that were considered relevant in the context of culture are identified in the study. First, the grammatical pattern commonly employed by the two speech communities is Subject-Verb-Object (S-V-O). It is frequently applied either in simple sentences or multiple sentences. Second, the rhetorical pattern of the two speech communities in terms of cohesive conjunctions is built on the adversative, that is, non-additive, to use Mohamed and Omer’s (2000) term. This result confirms the findings of Genuino (2002) which contradicts the Mohamed and Omer’s (2000) claim that the English rhetorical pattern is additive due to its having literate culture.

In Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) framework of cohesion, adversative means “contrary to expectations” whereas additive suggest that the meaning of one element (the presupposed) is dependent on the other (the presupposing).

Moreover, the pervasiveness of adversative relations in the two speech communities may be a function of their cultural characteristic. Kramsch (1998) believed that the US has been found to be the most individualist in the world. Thus, the preference of US for adversative rather than additive seems to support Lonner, Berry and Hofstede’s (1980) claim that the US has an individualist or universalist culture. On the other hand, Philippines is known to be pluralistic regarding race, language and culture. It is a mixture of different races, different languages and different cultures. No doubt, it is a pluralistic society.

The results yielded in this study affirm the hypothesis of contrastive rhetoric that different cultures have different rhetorical patterns. Nonetheless, this contrastive rhetorical analysis has also its limitations. First, it has failed to identify the occurrences of other sentence grammatical structures given by Quirk, et al. (1985). Second, it failed to figure out the occurrences of causal and temporal types of cohesive conjunctions. Finally, it focused only on sentential type of headlines;

hence, the inclusion of non-sentential type was not regarded. In response to these limitations, addendum of other newspapers in the two speech communities as well as taking into account the addition of some samples must also be considered for future studies along this topic.

CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the preceding findings, it can be concluded that Filipino and American news writers commonly used S-V-O pattern in writing headlines. This syntactic pattern was frequently applied in both simple and multiple or compound sentences. Regarding cohesive conjunctions, the rhetorical pattern of the two speech communities was formed through the adversative. Seemingly, both cultures employed the adversative 'but' to show cohesive relations in news headlines. Parallel cultural practices also existed in the two nationalities as reflected in the writing of news headlines. They both utilized simple sentence in constructing a news headline. Contrastively, S-V-C pattern was preferred in American headlines while the additive 'and' was favored in Philippine headlines. Thus, the grammatical patterns and types of sentence structures employed by the headline writers in the two linguistic communities revealed the socio- cultural practices they have.

The results of this contrastive rhetoric of news headlines in national and international newspapers have significant practical and pedagogical implications for L2 instruction. It can assist L2 teachers in identifying the syntactic similarities and differences of headlines in order to guide L2 learners toward better linguistic knowledge of news headlines. Since L2 teachers have the relevant contrastive information, they would know the real constraints of students in learning news headlines and other journalistic texts in order to deliver better instruction. The findings of this study also insinuate that Philippine newspapers are good instructional materials that can be utilized in teaching academic writing. The authentic language represented in the journalistic texts can serve as model for L2 writers.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The true measure of scholarly research is the dissemination, utilization and publication of its outputs. While there are many studies in the area of language and communication done by prolific researchers, only a few were disseminated and utilized through local and international fora. Among these researches that were shared for the consumption of human knowledge and for the enhancement

of the target clientele's skills and values, only a handful were published in an international refereed electronic journals.

The online availability of this study would contribute to the growing literatures on contrastive linguistics and other allied fields. Research enthusiasts, who are doing literature review along these aspects, could easily access and utilize the results through the use of internet. Through digital technology, readers and research scholars across the continents could readily grasp the information this study provided because it is internet accessible.

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