Deductive, Inductive, and Quasi-Inductive Writing Styles in Persian and English:

Evidence from Media Discourse

Mohammad Khatib[1]

Mahmood Reza Moradian[2]

Abstract: This study intends to locate the place topic sentence(s) in popular Persian and English newspaper editorials, and, then, check them in terms of their paragraph organization of deduction, induction, and quasi-induction. For the purpose of the study, 98 editorials (49 for each language) were given to four specialist raters to determine the exact place of the topic sentence in the corpora. A two-way chi-square was run for the whole data and a set of one-way chi-squares for the comparison of the individual subcategories in the study. The results revealed that Persian writing is different from that of English regarding the inductive and quasi-inductive writing styles and the number of the topic sentence(s) in each editorial. However, the two languages are similar in the use of the deductive writing style. Furthermore, Persian writers prefer to develop their editorials quasi-inductively while English writers prefer to use the inductive style and rarely develop their paragraphs quasi-inductively. These writing preferences imply the existence of cross-cultural differences between the two languages.
Key words: Contrastive rhetoric; Topic sentence; Writing styles; Deduction; induction; Quasi-induction

1. INTRODUCTION

Kaplan, the founder of Contrastive Rhetoric, believes that writers with different linguistic backgrounds and cultural traditions are apt to organize their paragraphs differently because they tend to organize their thoughts and arguments differently. He (1966, p. 20) asserts, in this regard, that "the English language and its related thought patterns have evolved out of the Anglo-European cultural patterns. The expected sequence of thought in English is essentially a Platonic-Aristotelian sequence, descended from the philosophers of ancient Greece and shaped subsequently by Roman, Medieval, European, and later western thinkers. It is not a better or worse system than any other, but it is different".

Kaplan's pioneering studies analyzed the textual organization of paragraphs in ESL writing essays. He, as a result, identified five types of paragraph development for five language groups, as indicated in his

---

frequently produced diagram (Figure 1) showing that L1 rhetorical structures were evident in L2 writings of his sample students.

Kaplan's work suggests that Anglo-European expository essays follow a linear development whereas paragraph development in Semitic languages is based on a series of parallel coordinate clauses. Essays written in Oriental languages including Persian, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, etc., Kaplan insists, use an indirect approach and come to the point only at the end. In Romance languages and Russian, according to Kaplan, essays are permitted a degree of digressiveness and extraneous material that would seem excessive to a writer of English.
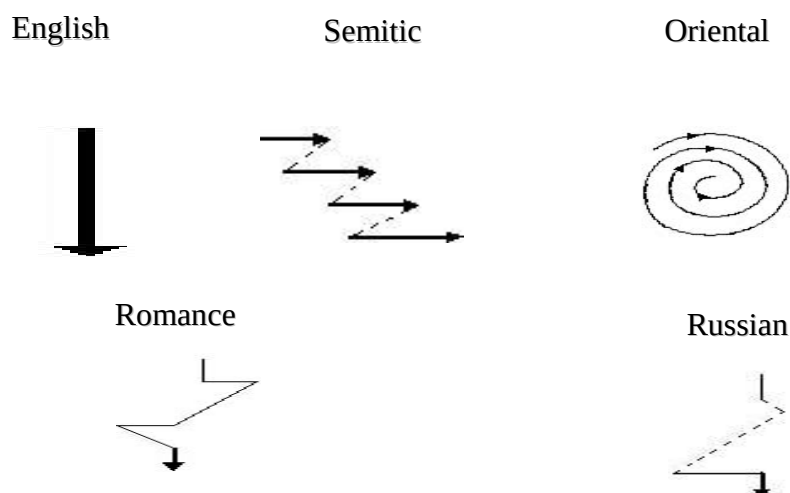
Figure 1: Kaplan's Cross-Cultural Thought Patterns (1966)

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kaplan's (1987) more recent studies on the cross-cultural rhetoric showed that "there are…important differences between languages in the way which discourse topic is identified in a text and in the way in which discourse topic is developed in terms of exemplification, definition, and so on" (p. 10). Confirming Kaplan's findings, Ostler (1988) drew the conclusion that different languages had different preferences for certain kinds of discourse patterns. For example, he argued that English expository prose had essentially linear rhetorical patterns which consisted of a clearly defined *topic-introduction-body*, which chained from one to the next, and a *conclusion* which told the reader what has been discussed.

In another study, Regent (1985) looked into the rhetorical macro-pattern characteristics of medical articles in French and English. He found that even in such scientific writing, which might be expected to be relatively independent of national traditions, there were differences of a magnitude which might lead to comprehension problems. Regent concluded that French writers intended to communicate the scientific facts organizing the whole of discourse around the data to be presented. As a result, the line of the argument was of secondary importance, if it existed at all. In English, Regent notes, on the other hand, it is "precisely the line of the argument which is of prime importance" (p. 119). Yet, in another study, Vahapassi (1988) argued that Finish writers intended to "cram their texts as full as possible with various points, which they hardly elaborate at all. Their own standpoint was often not expressed until at the end of the texts" (p. 216).

The studies noted so far probed into the nature of the expository text type. Researchers such as Dantas-Whitney and Grabe (1989) and Tirkkonen-Condit and Leiflander-Koistenen (1989) extended the domain of contrastive rhetoric studies to other text types such as persuasive writing. Doing studies on such

an important genre seems to be important for at least two main reasons. First, lots of work has been carried out on expository writing while few researches have dealt with persuasive writing. The second reason originates from the arguments made by some rhetoricians (e.g., Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969) that all writing is persuasive. By taking this statement for granted, the generalisability of the findings of such studies may increase due to the selection of editorials as the best examples of persuasive writing (Connor, 1996). In line with the same argument, Conner notes that "in most newspapers, the purpose of editorials is to influence the opinion of readers on some controversial issue" (p. 143).

As noted earlier, few studies have been conducted on the persuasive text type. Therefore, this area of rhetorical inquiry demands more research. Among the few, Dantas-Whitney and Grabe (1989) compared editorial texts in Brazilian, Portuguese, and English. They studied twenty editorials for fifteen linguistic variables. A significant difference was found on one dimension, the presentation of information, including six text features of use of nominalization, prepositions, third person singular pronouns, and locative adverbs. The English texts used a more formal, detached style than Portuguese editorials. English editorials used more nominalizations and prepositions whereas Portuguese ones utilized more personal aspects of texts such as third person singular pronouns. Tirkkonen-ondit and Leiflander-Koistinen (1989), working on the same genre, looked for the concise statements of the main point of the argument in a sample of newspaper editorials in Finnish, German, and English. The results of their analyses revealed that German and English editorials invariably bore a thesis statement or topic sentence, often at the very beginning, whereas the only editorials lacking in such a thesis statement came from the Finnish sample.

A thesis statement or topic sentence is normally put into the texture of a paragraph in two ways: Deduction or induction. Hinds (1990) brings evidence that some paragraphs in Oriental languages are developed in a third way in which the main idea is delayed to the middle of the paragraph. He called this specific style of writing *the quasi-inductive writing style*. The present study intends to locate the place of the thesis statement or topic sentence in Persian and English newspaper editorials. It then checks the Persian and English editorial writers' preferences in their use of deductive, inductive, and quasi-inductive writing styles.

3.   METHOD

3.1 Materials and pProcedures

A sample of 98 editorials served as the corpora in this study. They were taken from Persian and English newspapers with a wide circulation such as the Sunday Times, the Sunday Telegraph, and the Independent in English and the Hamshahry, the Keyhan,and the Resalat in Persian. The equal sample size was 49 editorials for each language. They were meticulously read by four specialist raters who were university professors holding Ph.D. degrees in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language). They were requested to locate the topic sentence (s) of each editorial. Bolivar's (1996) model of analysis was used to follow a uniform procedure in detecting the exact place of the topic sentence(s) in each editorial. The internal structure of the model can be described in terms of three fundamental turns, namely, lead, follow, and valuate. These three turns make a single triad. Bolivar assumes that the function of a triad "is to negotiate the transmission of information and evaluation in written text" (p. 28). A triad may combine with other triads to make a higher-ranking unit called movement. Yet, a movement may combine with other movements to make the largest unit at the highest rank named artifact. Thus, a hierarchical model was developed with the artifact and sentence on the opposite extremes of the ranking scale. The triad itself is assigned a certain function. The initiating triad in the structure of a paragraph is called situation. The triad that follows the first triad is the development and the last one is left for recommendation. The triads, making a movement, form the major part of the artifact. It should also be noted that a triad may not always consist of three turns. The turn lead is obligatory while the turns follow and valuate are not. They may be omitted by writers because they are optional elements in the internal structure of a paragraph.

Operationally speaking, if the topic sentence appeared in the first triad of an editorial, that editorial was said to have been developed *deductively*. On the contrary, if the raters made it clear that the topic sentence

was located in the last triad of an editorial, that editorial was called *inductive*. Finally, if the rhetorical structure of an editorial had been developed in a way that the topic sentence appeared somewhere other than the first of the last triad, that editorial was detected as *quasi-inductive.*

3.2 Results of the Study

A preliminary analysis of the corpora made by the raters revealed that the 49 editorials in the English data had 49 topic sentences meaning that each English editorial was developed to support one and only one topic sentence. This was not the case for the Persian data. The 49 Persian editorials had 62 topic sentences meaning that some editorials in the Persian data enjoyed more than a topic sentence. In other words, some editorials in the Persian data had been developed *multitopically* while the whole English data had been developed *monotopically.* The results of the preliminary analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The preliminary analysis of the Persian and English data

	Persian	English
Number of Editorials	49	49
Number of Topic Sentences	62	49
Deduction	37	26
Induction	6	17
Quasi-Induction	19	6

At the next stage of the statistical analysis of the data, a two-way chi-square for the whole data and a set of one-way chi-squares for the individual subcategories in the study were used to see if Persian and English newspaper editorials are similar or different in terms of deductive, inductive, and quasi-inductive writing styles. The result of the two-way chi-square (Table 2) shows that the critical value of x2 with 2 df is 5.99 at the .05 level. The observed value of x2 exceeds this critical amount (12.26), indicating that there is a significant difference between Persian and English in their use if the deductive, inductive, and quasi-inductive writing styles.

Table 2: The Two-way chi-square analysis for the whole Persian and English data

Column	Row	O	E	O-E	$(O-E)^2$	$(O-E)^2/E$
1	1	37	35.18	1.82	3.31	.09
1	2	26	27.81	-1.82	3.27	.11
2	1	6	12.84	-6.84	46.78	3.64
2	2	17	10.15	6.85	49.92	4.62
3	1	19	13.96	5.04	25.40	1.81
3	2	6	11.03	-5.03	25.30	2.29
						$X^2 = 12.26$

Subsequent to the above analysis, individual frequencies for each of the subcategories were compared. These were done to determine the relative contribution of each subcategory of deductive, inductive, and quasi-inductive writing styles to the overall x2 observed. The computation of x2 for the deductive style (Table 3) shows that this category does not contribute significantly to the overall x2. The critical value of x2 with 1 df is 3.84 at the .05 level which is larger than the observed value of x2 (3.27). Such a finding supports the claim that the difference between Persian and English writing styles is not due to the deductive category, indicating further that both Persian and English languages utilize the deductive writing style almost similarly.

Table 3: The one-way chi-square analysis for the deductive writing style

	O	E	O-E	$(O-E)^2$	$(O-E)^2/E$
Persian	37	37	0	0	0
English	26	37	-11	121	3.27
					$X^2 = 3.27$

A second one-way chi-square was conducted on the data coming from the inductive writing style. As Table 4 shows, the critical value of x2 (3.84) for the inductive category is much smaller than the observed value of x2 (36.78) at the .05 level, supporting the claim that the inductive writing style contributes significantly to the overall x2. Such a significant contribution has led to difference between Persian and English in their use of the writing style under investigation.

Table 4: The one-way chi-square analysis for the deductive writing style

	O	E	O-E	$(O-E)^2$	$(O-E)^2/E$
Persian	6	37	-31	961	25.97
English	17	37	-20	400	10.81
					$X^2 = 36.78$

The last one-way chi-square analysis (Table 5) shows the contribution of the quasi-inductive writing style to the overall value of x2. For this category, like the previous one, the critical value of x2 (3.84) with 1 df is smaller than the observed value of x2 (34.73), indicating that the quasi-inductive writing style contributes to making Persian and English rhetorically different.

Table 5: The one-way chi-square analysis for the deductive writing style

	O	E	O-E	$(O-E)^2$	$(O-E)^2/E$
Persian	19	37	-18	324	8.75
English	6	37	-31	961	25.97
					$X^2 = 34.73$

3.3 Discussion and conclusion

This research was carried out to see if there was a significant difference between Persian and English in the textual organization of their editorial paragraph development. As the results of the study showed, there were major points of difference between Persian and English in their use of the induction, deductive, and quasi-inductive writing styles. First, the number of topic sentences in the Persian and English data was varied. Each editorial in English dealt with one central idea or theme. All the supporting sentences in the English editorials support one and only one main idea embodied in the topic sentence. On the contrary, there was more than a topic sentence in a single Persian editorial. Raters witnessed one to five topic sentences in the Persian editorials under study. This characteristic of the Persian writing style inspired the researcher to name some Persian editorials *multitopical* in the sense that more than one main idea might be raised and supported in a single Persian editorial.

Secondly, Persian and English differed in their use of deductive, inductive, and quasi-inductive writing styles. Although writers of both Persian and English usually intended to develop deductive paragraphs (more than 50 % of the data), English writers preferred the inductive style (30 % of the data) to the quasi-inductive style. This study also showed that the quasi-inductive writing style was a characteristic feature of Persian writing.

Findings of this study lend support to the existence of cross-cultural differences between Persian and English writing systems in their use of deductive, inductive, and quasi-inductive writing styles and the number of main ideas in an editorial paragraph, and to the claim made previous research (Clyne, 1984; Dantas-Whitney & Grabe, 1989; Kaplan, 1966; Lieflander-Koistenen, 1989; Regent, 1985; Vahapassi, 1988, to name a few). The question which is now raised is why some Persian editorials are multitopical. There are tentative answers to this question which in turn demands more and more research. One possible answer to this question is that the Persian language is a rhetorically free order language in the sense that every triad in a Persian editorial has the capability to carry the topic sentence while this role shifts mainly to the first and the last triad in the English language. There is a rare chance for the in-between triads to carry the topic sentence in English. The second answer to the issue of *multitopicality* in Persian seems to be related the dominant influence of the oral mode on Persian prose writing. Although the form of the editorial paragraph is written, its organizational structure is to a great extent oral one major characteristic of which is *topic shift*. The speaker or orator, from time to time, shifts from one topic to another to embellish his speech.

As a result, multitopical paragraphs are common in Persian persuasive writing. The last, but not least, reason which can justify the concept of multitopicality in Persian writing is the lack of instruction programs to teach paragraph writing in the education system in our country. Paragraph development models and the organization of written discourse, in contrast to oral discourse, are not taught to students from the elementary up to the tertiary level. Therefore, it is natural that Persian writes do not have an established model to follow. Administering a questionnaire as part of a pilot study in this research confirmed Iranian students' total lack of knowledge regarding models of paragraph development.

The analysis of the data also showed that it is the contribution of the inductive and quasi-inductive writing styles which makes Persian and English rhetorically different. English writers prefer induction while Persian writers prefer the quasi-induction. So, part of the problem of Persian writing lies in the quasi-inductive writing style. Careful investigation of the quasi-inductive editorials showed that what made these editorials quasi-inductive was *a delay in the introduction of purpose*. This delay is triggered by the existence of poems and anecdotes by great Iranian poets and Koranic verses at the beginning triad of each Persian editorial. Such paragraphs made 10 percent of the Persian data. In such paragraphs, Persian writers devoted the first triad of the editorial to something which makes the line of the argument indirect and strenuous, supporting. This is in line with what Kaplan noted when he asserted that writing in Oriental languages such as Persian was indirect and circular, as shown in Figure 1.

As it was mentioned, the typical paragraph development model in English follows the *introduction + body + conclusion* order. This was also confirmed by the data in this study. The investigation of the Persian editorials also showed that most of the paragraphs in the Persian data are lacking in the *conclusion* section. This phenomenon makes the *introduction* and *body* sections bulkier than normal. Since there is mostly no concluding paragraph in Persian editorials, the main idea appears in the introduction and body sections. This enhances the possibility of quasi-inductive paragraphs in Persian. A point worthy of note here is that if Persian writers are trained to follow the principles of deductive and inductive writing styles and the *introduction-body-conclusion* paragraph organization, the number of quasi-inductive paragraphs decreases to a great extent. Finally, if Persian writers learn that there should be a concluding paragraph in any paragraph or essay, that concluding paragraph may have a chance to carry the topic sentence or the main idea of the text and by so doing an inductive paragraph is ensued.

4. CONCLUSION

Numerous studies have investigated the role of transfer in second language acquisition. When writers write in a language other than their native languages, they tend to use their native patterns in that piece of discourse. Kaplan (1966) and Ostler (1987), as two examples, showed that L1 writing strategies were transferred to L2 writing situations. Kaplan (1966) further noted that coordination and parallel construction were characteristics of Arabic writing. He showed the existence of these two patterns in Arabic students' ESL writings. Ostler (1987) also showed that while Arabic-speaking students seemed to have mastered the English grammatical forms and idioms, they still produced foreign-sounding essays. The results of the current study showed that Persian and English cultures varied in their use of the deductive, inductive, and quasi-inductive writing styles and the number of main ideas in each editorial. Now, these differences should be emphasized in the language teaching instruction to minimize their interfering effects on Persian ESL/EFL writers.

Bachman (1995) and Bachman and Palmer (2000) devised a model of language structure including many competencies and constructs. They mentioned a construct, among many other constructs, called *rhetorical competence*, which is a subcategory of *textual competence.* So a writing pedagogy that embraces the textual orientation of contrastive rhetoric "would work to actively foster the construction in students of rhetorical schemata" (Leki, 1991, p. 135). So, it is of prime importance to understand the mental representation of a text and "how it [the text] is formed in long-term memory has implications for text production or comprehension as well" (Conner, 1987, p. 49). Teaching the top-level rhetorical structures of texts to Persian ESL/EFL students and teaching them how to signal text organization and the way a

paragraph is developed through deduction and induction should all function to make writing more rhetorically effective.

REFERENCES

Bachman, L. F.. (1995). *Fundamental considerations in language testing.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bachman, L. F. & Palmer. A. S.. (2000). *Language testing in practice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bolivar, A.. (1996). The structure of newspaper editorials. In M. Coulthard (Ed.).

Carrel, P.; (1984). The Effect of Rhetorical Organization on ESL Readers. *TESOL Quarterly, Vol. 18, No. 2*: 441-469.

Clyne, M. G. English and German. In R. B. Kaplan (Ed.). *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics.* Vol. 3, 38-49.

Conner, U. (1987). *Argumentative patterns in student essays: Cross-cultural differences*. In U. Conner & R. B. Kaplan.

Conner, U.. (1996). *Contrastive rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second language writing.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Conner, U. & Kaplan, R. B.. (1987). *Writing across languages: The analysis of L2 text.* Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.

Coulthard, M. (1996). *Advances in written text analysis.* London: Rourledge.

Dantas-Whitney, M. & Grabe, W.. (1996). A *Comparison of Portuguese and English newspaper editorials.* In U. Conner (Ed.).

Hinds, J.. (1996). Inductive, deductive, and quasi-inductive: Expository writing in Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Thai. In U. Conner (Ed.).

Kaplan, R. B.. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in international education. *Language Learning, 16, 1-20.*

Kaplan, R. B.. (1987). *Cultural thought patterns revisited*. In U. Conner & R. B. Kaplan, (Eds.).

Leki, I. (1991). Twenty five years of contrastive rhetoric: Text analysis and writing pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly. Vol. 25, 1*, 123-143.

Ostler, S. E.. (1987). *English in parallels: A comparison of English and Arabic prose.* In U. Conner & R. B. Kaplan (Eds.).

Ostler, S. E.. (1988). *A study in the contrastive rhetoric of Arabic, English, Japanese, and Spanish.* Doctoral dissertation. University of South California.

Perelman, C. & Olbrechts-Tyteca, L.. (1969). *The new rhetoric.* Notre Dame.IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Regent, O.. (1985). *A comparative approach to the learning of specialized written discourse.* In P. Riley (Ed.).

Riley, P. (1985).. *Discourse and learning.* New York: Longman.

Tirkkone-Condit, S. & Lieflander-Koistinen, L.. (1996). *Argumentation in Finnish versus English and German editorials.* In U. Conner (Ed.).

Vahapassi, A.. (1992). *The domain of school writing and development of writing tasks.* In T. P. Gorman, A. C. Purves, & R. E. Degenhart (Eds.).