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REALIZATION OF LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS IN SOCIAL NETWORKS

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Abstract

The key fields of research for the given paper are pragmatics and sociolinguistics. The theoretical basis embraces the functions of language, speech act theory, politeness theory and cultural studies. Hence, the analysis is carried out based on the works of R. Jakobson (1960), B. Malinowski (1936), J. Austin (1962), J. Searle (1969), P. Brown & S. Levinson (1987) and other scholars. The empirical data are obtained from the most popular social network – Facebook. The analysis embraces messages in personal chat, timeline posts and comments to various events, statements and photographs. Research outcomes might be of interest for linguists interested in pragmatics, sociolinguistics, speech acts, functions of language, speech etiquette and politeness theory.

It is well known that two of the major functions of language are communicative and expressive. In the given paper I would like to discuss the realization of these functions of language in social networks.

As modern technology has yielded new channels of communication, it is interesting to study the verbal and non-verbal means of realization of phatic and expressive functions of language via social networks.

The expressive function is mostly realized in diverse posts and comments. Apart from the verbal means of realization of the expressive function, FB users frequently apply various kinds of emoticons, emoji, stickers and GIFs, expressing love, delight, anger, sadness etc.

Another function of language which is abundantly revealed in social networks is the phatic function. In this regard, I have distinguished 10 groups of utterances serving as examples of phatic communication: greetings, farewells, expressions of gratitude, apology, offers, invitations, blessings, congratulations, compliments, words of sympathy. The given paper offers detailed analysis of the above-mentioned phatic utterances in social network communication. The verbal and non-verbal means of realization of the phatic function of language are analyzed based on personal chat messages, timeline posts and comments.

The above-mentioned utterances are also analyzed from the viewpoint of speech act theory. The research has proved that the most frequent speech acts performed

via social networks are “behabitives” (Austin, 1962: 159) and “expressives” (Searle, 1976:12).

Communication via social networks is also analyzed from the viewpoint of “Face” (Brown, Levinson, 1987:313). In this regard, certain utterances and actions performed on social networks are viewed as “face-threatening acts” (ibid).

Thus, the expressive and phatic functions of language are performed on daily basis via social networks by diverse verbal and non-verbal means. Users of social networks have developed their own etiquette, which encourages the willingness for communication and expression of love, friendship and support.

Realization of Language Functions in Social Networks

It is well known that two of the major functions of language are communicative and expressive functions. Naturally, these functions are revealed either in written form or oral speech.

In the given paper I would like to discuss the expressive and phatic (hence, communicative) functions of language with regard to their realization in social networks.

Modern technology has yielded new channels of communication for performing the above-mentioned functions of language. Therefore, it is interesting to study the verbal and non-verbal means of realization of phatic and expressive functions of language via social networks. With this aim, I have researched the most popular social network - Facebook. The empirical material has been obtained from messages in my personal chat, my friends' posts and comments, as well as their reactions to various events, statements and photographs.

According to G. Leech, “language can have an expressive function: that is, it can be used to express its originator’s feelings and attitudes – swear words and exclamations are the most obvious instance of this”. (Leech, 1974:40).

D. Crystal notes that “the purpose of expressive use of language is to convey emotion. For example, the expression “Yuck” connotes disgust, but the word itself isn’t necessarily used to inform” (Crystal, 2005:228).

When discussing the expressive function of language, O. Hargie mentions the following examples: ““I am very happy” or “I spent a wonderful vacation” they reflect the feelings of the speaker or the writer” (Hargie, 2011:166).

I am sure that all of you have seen numerous posts of this kind on Facebook timeline.

The expressive function is mostly realized in diverse posts. I will name some of them:

Inscription above a posted video of music „ამ მუსიკაზე ვაფრენ“/am musikaze vafren/ “I am crazy about this music”.

Inscription below a photo of husband and daughter:

მიყვარხართ/miq'varxart/ ♥ “I love you”

“Feeling nostalgic” - inscription above a video of past memories of a dance party.

Apart from the verbal means of realization of the expressive function, FB users frequently apply various kinds of emoticons, emoji, stickers and GIFs (graphics interchange format).

👍 Like — Thumbs Up

- ♥ Love — Beating Heart
- 😂 Haha — Laughing Face
- 😊 Yay — Smiling Face
- 😲 Wow — Surprised Face
- 😭 Sad — Crying Face, showing an animated tear
- 😡 Angry — Red / Angry / Pouting Face

Excited – smile with stars in the eyes

Other emoji are: hopeful, joyful, grateful, loved, hopeful, heart-broken, motivated, tired, upset, relaxed etc.

Naturally, a great diversity of heart emoji is used for the expression of love.

These emoji are used both in posts and comments. GIFs and stickers are most frequent in chat communication. It is quite natural that in our hectic times, when people have no time for writing long texts to express their feelings, these means of expression have become extremely popular.

As I have mentioned, another function of language, which is most frequently realized in social networks, is the phatic function. In 1936 Malinowski introduced the concept of 'phatic communion'. He explained that the term implied "free, aimless social intercourse", "inquiries about health, comments on weather and greeting formulae" (Malinowski 1936: 313). B. Malinowski mentions that "phatic communion serves to establish bonds of personal union between people brought together by the mere need of companionship and does not serve any purpose of communicating ideas." (Malinowski 1936: 314-316).

Further, R. Jakobson used this term, naming phatic function of language among other six functions and noting that the phatic function implies the use of language "for the sake of interaction and is therefore associated with the Contact/Channel factor. The Phatic Function can be observed in greetings and casual discussions of the weather, particularly with strangers. It also provides the keys to open, maintain, verify or close the communication channel". (Jakobson, 1960:366).

The most popular example of phatic communication, mentioned by almost all linguists, is weather talk.

In social networks, this is revealed in posts as well as chat communication. Posts about the weather include both positive and negative assessments, and the person making the post also reveals his/her feelings about the weather. Thus, the function performed is not only phatic, but, in most cases, expressive as well. Chatting about the weather is frequent mostly in cases when the interlocutors are in distant places. For instance, when I am in the city and chat with people from my village. Thus, when there is no important news to discuss, the communication embraces weather talks.

Certainly, phatic communication is not limited to weather talks. In my dissertation thesis "Phatic Communication and British-Georgian Culture Differences" (1997) I distinguished 10 groups of utterances serving as examples of phatic communication: greetings, farewells, expression of gratitude, apology, offers, invitations, blessings, congratulations, compliments and words of sympathy.

Before discussing the ways and examples of performing these phatic speech acts in social networks, I would like to mention that the above utterances perform certain speech acts. In Austin's classification of performative utterances, the above-mentioned speech acts fall within the group of behabitives. According to

Austin, "Behabitives include the notion of reaction to other people's behavior, ... expression of attitudes... stating or describing what our feelings are" (Austin, 1962: 159). Examples of behabitive utterances are: apologize, thank, commiserate, compliment, condole, congratulate, felicitate, sympathize, welcome, bid farewell, bless and so on. In J. Searle's classification, the above-mentioned utterances fall within the group of "expressives". According to Searle, such speech acts express how the speaker feels about the situation. "Expressive verbs are 'thank', 'congratulate', 'apologize', 'condole', 'deplore', and 'welcome'" (Searle, 1976:12).

I will briefly discuss the verbal and non-verbal means of expressing the above-mentioned speech acts i.e. phatic utterances in social networks.

Greetings in social networks may be expressed by verbal means, for instance, "Hi" "Hello", "Good Morning", or non-verbally, using the emoji for "Wave" or "Wink".

As for farewells, there may be phrases like "Bye", "See you", "Keep in touch", or non-verbal means like emoji of "wave" and great diversity of hugs. With regard to farewells, it should be mentioned that ending of a conversation cannot be abrupt, the conversation has either to be drawn to its logical end, or, if we are forced to end it for some urgent affair, we have to make an excuse like "Sorry, I have to go now, baby's crying" or "Sorry, my phone is ringing". Even if we simply want to close the conversation because we are bored, it is recommended that we invent some fake reason for bidding farewell. In this case we violate Austin's felicity condition of sincerity, but, "there are occasions when sincerity is overridden by politeness. These occasions are presumably determined by social convention" (Lyons, 1977:734). Being sincere in the above-mentioned situation and just saying we bid farewell because we are bored or tired with chatting is considered a "face-threatening act" (Brown, Levinson, 1987:313).

Communication in social networks frequently contains expressions of gratitude. For instance, a post of a woman whose son has entered a university: "უკვე სტუდენტის დედა ვარ. დიდი მადლობა ჩემი შვილის მასწავლებლებს, რომლებიც „იბრძოდნენ“ მისი წარმატებისთვის. დიდი მადლობა ყველა ჩემს მეგობარს რჩევებისა და გამხნეებისთვის" /ukve studentis deda var. didi madloba chemi shvilis masc'avleblebs romlebic ibrdzodnen misi c'armatebistvis. didi madloba q'vela chems megobars rchevebisa da gamkhnevebistvis/ "I am a student's mother now. I would like to thank the teachers of my son who have "fought" for his success. I also thank my friends for their advice and encouragement". Naturally, we often write personal messages to our friends and relatives thanking them for their presents or kind deeds. Frequently, posts of gratitude involve thanking our friends, colleagues and relatives who have congratulated us on our birthday, e.g.

დიდი მადლობა ყველას, ვინც მომილოცა დაბადების დღე. ყველანი მიყვარხართ. /didi madloba q'velas vinc momiloca dabadebis dghe. q'velani miq'varkhart/ (Thanks to everyone who has congratulated me on my birthday. I love you all), or "Words are not enough to express my gratitude to all who remember my birthday and fill me with so much love and warmth. Thank you for your kind wishes".

Phatic expressions of apology in social networks mostly refer to late replies, e.g. "Sorry for the late reply, I was unable to see your message; the internet was switched off". In certain cases, words of apology are used to mitigate rejections of

certain offers or invitations: “Sorry, I can’t attend the event, as I am out of town, I would love to come. Anyway, I wish you success”.

As for offers and invitations, one of the most vivid examples is friend request, the decline of which is usually considered as FTA. Other offers spread via social networks are commercial offers, suggestions to join some interest group or play a computer game.

Invitations imply various social or cultural events. There are also personal invitations to parties etc. Non-verbally, invitations to parties may be expressed by stickers with bottles, glasses, cakes etc.

The reaction of the addressee in this case is expressed either verbally: “I’ll come by all means”, “With great pleasure” or simply by clicking the buttons “interested” or “going”. Refusals are expressed verbally, and, to avoid insult to the other person’s feelings, we should explain the reason, even if it is fictional. In this case, we also violate Austin’s sincerity condition.

As for blessings and congratulations, there are numerous examples on timelines and in personal chats, e.g. გილოცავ დაბადების დღეს /gilocav dabadebis dghes/, “Happy Birthday”, “Wishing you all the best”, “Good Luck”, “God Bless you and your family” and so on. The non-verbal means are also abundant, as the internet offers thousands of birthday cards. Blessings are frequent in the comments to posted wedding photos, e.g.: “Be happy and always love each other!”

As the main aim of phatic communication is to establish warm and friendly relationships, in an attempt to please the interlocutor, we often say compliments. There are numerous examples of these in comments to photos: რა ლამაზი ხარ! /ra lamazi khar/ (you are so beautiful) “You look great!” “Simply Gorgeous!” and so on. Sometimes compliments are expressed by interjections like “Wow!” or, non-verbally, by pressing the “like” button.

Unfortunately, in every person’s life there are certain problems or unhappy occasions. According to a well-known saying, “A problem shared is a problem halved”. Naturally, FB is the best place where one can share his/her problems with thousands of people. Such posts are examples of the expressive function of language. Comments to such posts embrace expression of sympathy. For instance, comments to a post informing someone’s death: ღმერთმა ნათელში ამყოფოს /ghmertma natelshi amq’ofos/, “May he/she rest in peace”, “I will always remember and love him/her”, emoji of a face in tears. Comments to someone’s illness are: “Don’t worry, I am sure you will soon be out of hospital and we will celebrate it” or “Get Well Soon” posters. Comments to certain problems also include questions like “Can I be of any help?”.

Thus, as we see from the above-mentioned examples, the expressive and phatic functions of language are performed on daily basis via social networks. For this purpose, we use a great diversity of verbal and non-verbal means.

Users of social networks have developed their own etiquette, which encourages the willingness for communication and expression of friendship, love and support. However, there are certain face-threatening aspects related to the implementation of the expressive and phatic functions via social networks. For instance, declining of friendship offer, pressing the “unfriend” button, leaving a message unanswered, especially if it is “seen”, and, of course, critical or even abusive posts or comments which are, unfortunately, also frequent on Facebook.

In conclusion, I wish all the users of social networks to make posts about positive events occurring in their lives and to make comments to other people's posts with phatic utterances expressing warmth, sympathy and admiration.

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A COMPUTATIONAL LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF BREAST CANCER SURVIVORS' ONLINE DISCUSSION MESSAGES ACROSS FOUR STAGES

MENG CHEN

In recent years, the Internet has been used extensively by people seeking health-related information and emotional support. Their digital footprints serve as a great source for researchers to investigate people's language use indicative of their mental well-being. Adopting a computational language analysis, this study explored breast cancer survivors' linguistic features of their online discussion messages in relation to their medical timeline. Prior research found that breast cancer patients go to online discussion group primarily seeking information about their illness for a health-related decision, learning what would come next, sharing their experiences, or pursuing social support. However, most research examining online discussion messages collected cross-sectional data, and thus was not able to project patients' psychological change as the disease progresses and medical events unfold. One exception is a narrative case study examining one breast cancer survivor's message themes across the disease progression. Even though it offered a glimpse into the patient's psychological change, the results may not be able to represent other patients.

The current study web-scraped the online posts of 1,443 of forum members on the Breast Cancer Discussion Forum (<https://community.breastcancer.org/>), who produced more than 27,000 threads that elicited more than 637,000 replies. These posts were analyzed using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), a software program that measures grammatical and psychological dimensions in text records. Several linguistic categories in the online posts, including positive and negative emotion words, personal pronouns, cognitive process, personal concerns, were compared across four stages of breast cancer using ANOVA analysis.

The results were threefold. First, medical and treatment related words (chemo, breast, onc) decreased from Stage I through Stage IV, whereas positive affective words dramatically increased (hope, love, happy). Second, the results supported Kübler-Ross's Model of Grief, which argues that people suffering from a terminal disease experience five psychological stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. For example, medical words (chemo) showed a dramatic increase

in frequency from Stage I to Stage II, followed by a gradual decrease through Stage IV. This change may reflect patients' psychological switch from denial to bargaining. By contrast, social processes and affiliation words (love, family, friends) reached their frequency peak at Stage IV, showing an acceptance status. Finally, along with the affective process words, survivors increasingly used first person pronouns from Stage I to Stage IV. It was speculated that they are engaging more and more self-disclosure and self-reflection behaviors as the disease unfolds.

The present study has several contributions. First, this linguistic analysis provides an unobtrusive measurement to understand breast cancer patients' underlying psychological trajectories against the four stages of breast cancer. Our results suggested that patients in the later stages empower themselves via positive languages and manifest an upbeat attitude towards of acceptance at the end of life. Second, information support is prevalent in the early stages of breast cancer, whereas emotional support becomes more important in the later stages. Third, survivors in the later stages empower themselves via positive affective language, as well as engage in self-disclosure and self-reflection behaviors.

SOCIAL MEDIA: IS IT CHANGING THE ARABIC LANGUAGE?

SHAHIRA YACOUT

The popularity of social media tools has increased dramatically over the past years, more than a billion people worldwide are using social media as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others a regular basis for personal and business purposes (Didelot 2013; Blattner & Lomicka 2012). However, Facebook has played more and more important roles in social interaction and became the world's largest and busiest social networking site (Alice, 2009). Globally, Facebook now boasts 1.11 billion monthly active users; Egypt still has the largest portion of Facebook users in the Arab world followed by Morocco and Saudi Arabia (Mourtada and Salem, 2011). Furthermore, according to Facebook's company info, the number of daily users who were engaged in the sites' services during December 2016 reached 1.23 billion on average with 85.2% of activities taking place outside North America. (Facebook)

The online communication language on social media or also known as digital language or even "Netspeak", is described as a language that represents the concept of "in formalization". "The phenomenon of Netspeak is going to 'change the way we think' about language in a fundamental way, because it is a linguistic singularity – a genuine new medium" (Crystel, 2006, p.238). Many researchers stated that online communication uses informal patterns of language in both formal and informal settings for different purposes and functions (Hassan and Hashim, 2009).

The difference between social media text and other forms of written language has been subject of increase interest to many scholars in the field of linguistics. The unplanned and informal style of writing in many social media spaces is comparable to oral speech but in the mode of written language which suggests that the traditional discrepancies between the forms and functions of writing and speech become less useful (Kern 2014). Some linguists noted that the language used on Facebook is usually informal and conversational. A mode of written language was developed similar to the oral speech as Facebook users have invented specific writing styles and conventions through observing and copying their peers (Alm, 2015). Due to the wide spread usage of Arabic language on social media, it became an interest for educators and scholars to study this domain. Crystal (2011) mentioned that "wherever we find language, we find linguists".

In this descriptive study, the collected data includes samples of both Egyptian

male and female participants from different areas, ages and backgrounds among Egypt. Daily observation and documentation were made over 6 months. The raw material included posted comments, statements, pictures, slogans, proverbs, religious prayers collected to investigate the Arabic online communication language.

The study aims to investigate and describe the different Arabic written language conventions, and linguistic features on Face book in the light of Badawi's levels of contemporary Arabic in Egypt (Badawi 1993, 2012). The study will answer the following questions: 1. Is the linguistic reality described by Badawi's model reflected in the Arabic language posted on Facebook? 2. Are there any new linguistic features that can be identified on Facebook?

The study documents Arabic language varieties and describes an emerging online language which has triggered many studies and research from different angles and perspectives. The conclusion and implications derived from this study will be highly beneficial to AFL teachers in dealing with the current changes in the Arabic language patterns of communication, since social media are a great platform for students to have the chance to experience real, meaningful and effective language learning context. The research tool employs a content analysis based on several criteria derived from Badawi's contemporary level of Arabic.

ASSESSING POST-EDITING EFFORT THROUGH SEMANTIC SIMILARITY

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Abstract

Following their increasing performances, which highly depend on the advances in natural language processing, machine translation systems have become one of the efficient components of translator's workbench. Generally working under tight deadlines, translators resort to machine translation systems in their translating processes in order to produce a target text in a shorter period. Although these systems could make some translation errors on syntactic and semantic levels, they yield better results on lexical level. Therefore, the target text retrieved from a machine translation system requires human touch. Post-editing could be defined as the human revision of machine-translated text. Making necessary changes and adjustments, translators also work as post-editors in today's world. It is a well-known fact that there is a direct relation between the performance of a machine translation system and the required post-editing effort. When the performance of a machine translation system is relatively high, there occurs a decrease in the post-editing effort.

With the advent of neural machine translation systems such as Google Translate, it has been observed that the expressions with similar semantic content in different languages form similar structures in the neural network shaped in the background. This has led to the emergence of zero-shot translation systems. As an indirect consequence of this phenomenon, it will not be wrong to assume that the success of a translation rendered by these systems can be evaluated by means of back-translations using the same systems.

In this study, firstly, we will try to show that the semantic similarity between the back-translation of the raw machine-translated text and its source text can be considered as an indicator of the success of the machine translation system. Then, it will be illustrated that the semantic similarity between the back-translation of the post-edited machine translation and its source text is higher compared to the

semantic similarity between the back-translation of raw machine translation and the relevant source text. Using this comparative method, we will also try to put forward that this process can contribute to the assessment of post-editing effort by semantic similarity.

Machine Translation (MT) Systems as Translation Aids

A subfield of computational linguistics, machine translation (MT) could be defined as the translation of a text by a computer without human interaction. Due to the demand for fast and qualified translations, especially within the field of applied sciences, MT systems have become one of the essential components of the translator's workstation.

Following the advent of computational and technological advances in software industry, a bunch of MT systems have been developed. MT systems such as *Google Translate*, *Yandex Translate* and *Bing Microsoft Translator*, are used as free online services which employ state-of-the-art natural language processing techniques in order to translate texts automatically from source to target language(s). Nowadays, these systems are not only used by translators, but also the individuals who wish to understand the content of a text written in a foreign language. Therefore, it will not be wrong to say MT systems have a large target audience, and millions of people all over the world use these systems for different language pairs every day in order to obtain translations.

Translators could be assumed as a specific group among the users of MT systems. Besides computer-assisted tools (Trados, MemoQ, etc.), translation memories, term banks and termbases, translators resort to MT systems in their translating processes. Translators generally work under tight deadlines and the demand for rapid translations leads them to use MT systems in order to produce a target text in a shorter period. Although MT systems have inevitably entered into the workflow of translators, machine-translated texts could include some errors on different linguistic levels such as lexical, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic ones. The amount of these errors generally depends on the language pair that is used. For instance, MT systems generally show a better performance between the languages which belong to the same language family, however, they could render low-quality target texts between languages which have different syntactic structures. Due to the parallel corpora used by MT systems, lexical errors are less frequent than any other type.

Anyway, defined as "raw material", the machine-translated text requires human fixation or amendments in most of the text types. This raw material, in other words, the first target text, is revised by a human translator and the process of this revision is called post-editing (PE).

Post-editing as a New Task of the Translator

Post-editing is defined as "examination and correction of the text resulting from an automatic or semi-automatic system (machine translation/translation memory) to ensure it complies with the natural laws of grammar, punctuation, spelling, meaning, etc." (EU, 2004). Post-editing is an activity done to maximize the effectiveness of MT output. In this process, a post-editor tries to make necessary corrections on the output in order to produce a more functional, acceptable and

fluent target text. In a translation project, the translator could also work as the post-editor, or the post-editor could be another person.

There is a reverse correlation between the performance of the MT system used in the translating process and the post-editing effort that is required. If the MT system performs well, relatively lower post-editing effort is needed because the raw material does not include many translation errors. By the way, the performance of the MT system is related to the language and textual-based factors. Since the performance of the MT system depends on the language pair, text type, and the specific domain of the source text, the same factors also affect the level of post-editing effort.

The ultimate aim of the post-editing activity seems to make the raw material similar to human translation as much as possible, however, in parallel with the aim of the translation (*skopos*), the level of similarity between the machine-translated version and envisaged human translation of the same source text could differ. If the *skopos* of the final target text is to be just understood by the target reader, light post-editing is enough. It means that rather than syntactic features, the content of the source text is examined and revised in order to render an adequate target text to the reader within the process of post-editing. On the other hand, full post-editing is required if the aim of the final translation is to be published. Full post-editing includes syntactic, semantic and contextual amendments on the machine-translated text in order to move the raw material to a publishable quality. Whether full or light post-editing is required, the post-editor should have some skills in order to produce a functional target text. According to Doherty and Gaspari, key skills that post-editors should have are:

- excellent word-processing and editing skills;
- ability to work and make corrections directly on screen;
- general knowledge of the problems and challenges faced by MT;
- specific knowledge of the weaknesses of the particular MT system;
- knowledge of source and target languages;
- quick in making decisions as to what and how to correct (or ignore errors);
- ability to always balance PE speed and cost with respect to required quality;
- ability to adapt to different specifications required for each job (2013).

Pre-editing activities may decrease the post-editing effort that is required. Pre-editing means revising the source text including the correction of grammatical and typographical errors, cutting off long sentences and simplifying complex structures. To some extent, pre-editing process contains intralingual translation and this process requires post-editor's knowledge about the strengths and limitations of the MT system in use. To put it another way, if the post-editor knows which sentence patterns are translated successfully with the preferred MT system, s/he may revise the relevant components as per the strengths of the MT system. When the source text is well-organized and contains less errors, MT output becomes clearer and more acceptable.

Following pre-editing phase, the translation period begins. The translator/post-editor installs the pre-edited source text into the MT system and yields the result in the target language just in a few seconds. Then, considering the translation brief, and the features of target language, the post-editor makes necessary changes on

the MT output. In this phase, post-editing skills which develop by expertise and experience gain importance. Finally, the last version of the translation is obtained.

The Need for Novel Method in Assessing Post-editing Effort

It is stated in the *TAUS PE Guidelines* (Massardo et al., 2016) that there are two main criteria affecting the post-editing effort. These criteria are the quality of the raw machine translation and the expected quality of the final product. As we have already mentioned, increase in the performance of machine translation systems, which means a higher quality in raw machine translations, brings out a lower post-editing effort. In terms of expected quality of the final product, *TAUS PE Guidelines* states that the quality of the translation could be divided into two categories: “good enough” and “human translation”. When these two different quality classes are examined thoroughly, it is observed that the most important features that should be preserved in the target text are semantic correctness and information content.

There are many methods used to measure the amount of post-editing on raw machine translations. While some of them are automatic methods based on the comparison on lexical level, others include manual evaluations realized by humans. In the process of automatic comparison on lexical level, the amount of amendments made on the raw machine translation is counted and the effort spent on PE is evaluated in this way. On the other hand, the post-edited text is examined by different people rather than translators and the syntactic, semantic and stylistic competence of the translation is tried to be determined within the scope of human evaluation.

Increase in translation demand also requires a shorter translating process. Therefore, the stage at which PE assessment is performed should be as short as possible before the final product is obtained. Automatic methods that are often used to shorten this stage are generally based on the method of counting changes on lexical level. Since this method cannot give a measurement of semantic correctness and preservation of the information content, which manual human evaluation can offer, it seems to be insufficient in terms of the assessment of PE effort. However, the automatic method is generally preferred due to the fact that it is faster than manual evaluation and this results in a poor evaluation of ‘the transfer of information’, which is the main purpose of the translation activity.

As it can be seen, taking into account the increasing need for translations, a new method that combines the positive aspects of these two methods mentioned above should be put forward. This new method should be automatic regarding the need for completing a translation task in a relatively shorter period and simultaneously, it should be able to measure semantic correctness and preservation of information content. In this study, with the aim of establishing such a criterion, a semantic similarity measurement method has been tried to be integrated in PE assessment flow with the back-translation method, which was previously used to evaluate the accuracy of translations. In order to examine this flow in detail, firstly it would be better to deal with the concepts of forward and back translations.

Forward and Back Translations

In general terms, translation is transferring the content of the text written in the source language into the target language. While forward translation aims at

translating source text into target text, back translation is the reverse version of this process. To put it another way, back translation is the translation of target text (which has already been translated) into the source language. In the process of back translation, the target text which is the product of forward translation process, serves as the source text. Back translation is used for several purposes in a variety of contexts.

One of the main uses of this method is back translating minor language expressions into major languages in order to make the content comprehensible to target readers. For instance, while giving translation patterns and examples, back-translated versions from a minor language into the major language (generally the language of the academic paper) are given.

Another field where back translation is used is determining the accuracy of the translation in cross-cultural research (Brislin, 1970). Here the concept of "accuracy of the translation" could also refer to the performance of the translator. Therefore, the method may be used by translation companies in order to assess the capabilities of the employed translators. Back translation is generally done by a different individual rather than the translator who has rendered the forward translation. Therefore, reaching an optimal level of objectivity is aimed.

Collins states two strategies to be applied for determining the accuracy using back translations. In the first strategy, if the client asks for a back translation besides the forward translation, he suggests commissioning one team to do forward translation, and another team for back translation. After that, a "source-to-back translation comparison" could be made in order to correct any inconsistencies between the forward and back translation. Then, both documents are delivered to the client (Collins, 2005).

In the second scenario, in some occasions, the client both requests forward and back translation, but the forward translation first. In this case, after having completed the back translation, it is compared with the forward translation and the source text with the aim of correcting errors in the forward translation. Then the revised version of the forward translation, back translation and a list of corrections with their justifications are delivered to the client (Collins, 2005 pp. 20). Since back translating resembles crosschecking of the translation, providing both forward and back translation documents to the client, it may help clarifying questions in his/her mind about the accuracy of the translation.

Paegelow offers some guidelines for back translation:

1. A back translation should follow the same quality control procedures as the original translation.
2. Comparisons of the source text with the text from a back translation should focus only on the "differences that matter."
3. Ignore the "differences that do not matter."
4. Source text ambiguities may arise that should be resolved by the author of the original source text (Paegelow, 2008 pp. 24).

A qualified back translation is needed in order not to render a translation independent of the context. It means back translator should have conceptual and contextual considerations. Secondly, the aim of back translation and its comparison to the source text should not result in the whole revision of the forward translation.

This comparison is realized to make the necessary amendments on the forward translation in parallel with the meaning of the source text.

Back translation is generally used for determining the accuracy of technical translations such as medical, engineering and legal texts rather than literary works. The writer of these texts are extensively the scholars or professionals using specialized language and working in relevant fields. Therefore, they are not actual authors and they could make some errors at different levels while writing the source text. It is better to determine the erroneous parts of the text beforehand and to make fixation preceding the translating process. This phase resembles pre-editing stage of the machine-translated texts.

Contrary to the translator who translates from the source language to the target language, considering the expectations of the target audience with a functional and communicative approach, the back translator should refrain from producing a "natural" target text in target language. (Klein & Van Til, 2014). In other words, back translator should adapt a source-oriented approach rather than a target-oriented one. Therefore, a back translator should try to realize a "literal" translation to the extent allowed by the norms of the target language. This approach seems similar to the concept of "semantic translation" stated by Peter Newmark. According to Newmark, "semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original" (1981, pp.39). Eugene Nida's concept of "formal equivalence" (Nida, 1964), which is explained as "focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content" could also be assessed within the same context. This source-oriented approach aims at reflecting the meaning of the source language expression to the target language expression as much as possible.

Another domain in which back translation is used is evaluating the performance of machine translation systems. In this domain, back translation is also called as "round-trip translation", "reverse translation" and "back-and-forth translation" and it refers to the process in which the source text is translated via a machine translation system, and the target text (obtained from the machine translation system) is translated by using the same machine translation system into the source language. The idea behind this process is the assumption that the quality of a machine translation system is good if it produces the same (or very close) expression in the source language which has been back translated.

Intuitively, this approach seems to be appropriate for evaluating machine translation systems, but some studies suggest that this method has significant flaws. Using BLEU and F- score metrics in his study, Somers (2005) tried to find out whether back translation was an indicator of success and stated that the study yielded a negative result. However, in addition to the automatic evaluation method used in the relevant study, he noted that the experiments should be repeated using human evaluation in order to be sure of the results. Considering this note of Somers, Rapp (2009), made a study that included human evaluation and showed that back translation could give an idea about the quality of translation. Crystal (2004) also states that because the texts written by scientists or engineers do not contain complex literary expressions, the method of back translation may be appropriate for verifying the content (or concepts) in the process of evaluating translations.

In studies to test the appropriateness of the use of back translation for

measuring the performance of machine translation systems, it is emphasized that the errors occurred in the target expressions which are translated by the machine translation system should especially be taken into consideration. While the forward translation retrieved from the system could be high-quality, the back translation could include errors. The other possibility is that the back translation of low-quality forward translation could be accurate (Aiken & Park, 2010). Similarly, Rapp explains this phenomenon as “What remains is the fact that evaluation based on back translations can be easily fooled, e.g. by a system that does nothing, or that is capable of reversing errors. These obvious deficits have probably motivated reservations against such systems, and we agree that for such reasons they may be unsuitable for use at MT competitions.” (Rapp, 2009).

Although there are different opinions regarding the feasibility of back translation method on the measurement of performance of the machine translation systems, the speed of human evaluation of back translation is lower than that of automatic measurement methods such as BLEU (Papineni et al, 2002). However, it has been observed that there are problems about the reliability of automatic criteria such as BLEU (Callison-Burch et al., 2006). Also, BLEU requires reference translations for evaluation. However, it is not possible to create reference translations for each translation project and to measure the performance of the post-editor or the translator. The use of source language expression as a reference in the back translation method within the evaluation process seems advantageous when compared to some criteria as BLEU. As we have mentioned in the previous section, this highlights back translation method in establishing a new and automatic criterion of evaluation that takes into account the criteria such as the preservation of semantic correctness and information content; and closeness to the human evaluation.

An important issue that needs to be addressed at this point is a paradigm shift in the concept of machine translation experienced in recent years. Together with the transition from statistical machine translation (SMT) systems to neural machine translation (NMT), observable increases in translation quality have been obtained. This is due to the structure of neural-based machine translation systems.

Schuster et. al. (2016) explain zero-shot translation infrastructure designed for Google Translate with these words “within a single group, we see a sentence with the same meaning but from three different languages”. They then state, this situation means that the semantic contents of the sentences are coded in the neural network instead of storing the phrase-to-phrase translations, which indicates the existence of an *interlingua* in the neural network.

Neural-based machine translation systems have started to make sense-for-sense translations (semantic translations) and this phenomenon requires the evaluation of translations with a semantic criterion rather than lexical or phrase-based criteria such as BLEU. Let us now try to clarify this semantic infrastructure by briefly examining statistical and neural systems.

Statistical vs. Neural Machine Translation

Phrase-based MT (PBMT), which is generally called Statistical MT, is performed through the segmentation and matching of phrases. Parallel corpora are used in the training of these systems in order to obtain language and translation models. While

the translation model contains different translations of phrases, the language model contains the probabilities of the word sequences in the target language. In the translation process, using these two models, the decoder tries to produce the best result. However, these systems, which can produce quality translations on phrase level, are generally inadequate at syntactic level and fluency. Any grammatical or semantic knowledge could not be integrated into the systems developed with this approach, and the quality of the translation is directly related to the quality and size of the corpora used in training. In statistical MT systems, the mentioned models need to be created separately for each pair of languages. This is an important problem for systems that translate between multiple languages.

Neural MT systems are trained with a neural-network based machine learning approach and an interlingual translation infrastructure as mentioned in the previous section emerges. The concept of *interlingua* refers to an intermediate representation obtained from the source language through semantic analysis. Interlingual translation is based on producing a target expression from an interlingual common semantic representation. In an interlingual MT system, if the meaning of the source language expression is analyzed and coded in a language-independent form, the expression in the target language could also be generated from this intermediate form. The basic assumption of this method is that a language-independent semantic representation could be derived.

Neural MT systems have two basic components: *encoding component* in which the analysis of the source language expression is done, and *decoding component* in which the target language expression is generated directly. In neural MT systems, words are analyzed and stored as “word vectors”, which contain contextual information learned from the training data. During the training process, the system attempts to determine the parameter weights in the neural network using the reference values. This allows for the words used in similar contexts to create similar word vectors. In other words, it is ensured that the words with common features are positioned close to each other in the vector space. Following the training process, a neural network structure which processes the source language segments and transforms them into target language segments is formed. During the translating process, the system attempts to form complete sentences rather than phrases. The systems produced with this approach enable the transfer of information and context of the source language expression into the target language, not the words or phrases.

Since neural MT approach enables phrases in source language to be transformed into a representation in semantic space, rather than just into phrases in target language, a system that translates in accordance with the neural MT approach focuses on semantic structure of the expressions and it is based on preserving the information content in the translation process. A remarkable feature observed in the translations obtained from neural MT systems which translate according to the proximity between semantic structures in the vector space rather than phrase-matching tables is that the system seems to understand source language expression and it has the capacity to paraphrase the expression (Bessenyi, 2017).

Translating through semantic equivalence and paraphrasing, neural-based systems cannot be assessed thoroughly with the equivalence concept on lexical level via using the criteria such as BLEU, in terms of their performance. Bessenyi

(2017) illustrates this situation with the following example:

DE original: Der Rechnungsführer sorgt für die gebotenen technischen Vorkehrungen zur wirksamen Anwendung des FWS und für dessen Überwachung.

Reference human translation: The accounting officer shall ensure appropriate technical arrangements for an effective functioning of the EWS and its monitoring.

NMT: The accounting officer shall ensure the necessary technical arrangements for the effective use of the EWS and for its monitoring.

Bessenyi (2017) states that the neural machine translation in this example is fluent and the differences between reference and machine translations are only preferential. Bessenyi also indicates that the quality is very high even though there is a 50% match in the BLEU score. This difference in the operation of neural MT systems requires the measurement of semantic similarity, which is a different approach for the evaluation of performance. The measurement of semantic similarity obtained through a reference translation, as in this example, will clearly demonstrate the success of translation. For semantic similarity measurements presented in this study, *cortical.io* (<https://www.cortical.io/compare-text.html>), a system employing a technique called “semantic folding”, which allows the comparison of texts by converting them into semantic fingerprints, is used. The measurement of semantic similarity between machine translation and reference translation for the example above is calculated as 88% by *cortical.io* system. In view of this situation, it would not be wrong to conclude that an evaluation of semantic similarity for neural MT systems will yield results close to the human evaluation.

Semantic Similarity Between Source Text (ST) and Back-Translation (BT)

Let us examine the semantic similarity approach that we can use to evaluate the neural MT systems through an example:

ST-EN: Linguists as well as statisticians were always dreaming about the Interlingua.

TT-TR (NMT): Dilbilimciler ve istatistikçiler her zaman Interlingua'yı hayal ediyorlardı.

TT-TR (PBMT): Dilbilimciler yanı sıra istatistikçiler hep Interlingua hayal bulundu.

BT-EN (NMT): Linguists and statisticians were always dreaming of Interlingua. (98% semantic overlap with ST)

BT-EN (PBMT): As well as linguists, statisticians always dreamed Interlingua found. (78% semantic overlap with ST)

For this translation, carried out with *Google Translate*, it is possible to say a quality translation has been obtained, even though the Turkish target text as raw material requires a little amount of post-editing. Also, examples of paraphrasing can be seen in the text that is produced when the original text obtained from NMT is back translated. When the semantic similarity between the source text and the back-translation is measured, a high score (98%) is obtained and this shows that semantic similarity could be an indicator of the performance of the translation. Also, we can observe that, similarity was significantly reduced when the translation of the same source text obtained from PBMT and its back-translation (again realized by PBMT) are measured. This clearly demonstrates the preservation of meaning in neural translation as we mentioned in the previous section.

Semantic Similarity Between Source Text (ST) and Back-Translation of Post-Edited Target Text (TT)

Due to the structure of the system based on the preservation of information content in translation, semantic similarity criterion can be used via back translation in measuring the performance of an NMT system. Depending on the performance of the system during the translation process, it is natural that some information loss occurs. It will not be wrong to say that this challenge will gradually be overcome over time by increasing the training data. Naturally, the *Google NMT*, a system that can work in zero-shot translation context, will be faster than SMT systems in training, because it exploits data from many languages, not just a specific pair of languages.

The translation process of NMT systems is based on meaning and this results in semantic errors rather than syntactic ones in raw translations produced by these systems. Therefore, the translator who will post-edit the raw target text should firstly determine the semantic errors. The most important point that the translator should pay attention to is the semantic shifts between the source text and the raw target text, as the performance of the system or its positioning of concepts in the vector space may change depending on data which the system has been trained. This phenomenon has led to a shift of the post-editing activities from syntactic level to semantic level with the emergence of NMT systems.

When the back translation of raw machine translation, semantic errors of which have been corrected with post-editing, is done, it will have a similar or close meaning to the source text. In other words, when the lost / missing meaning occurred within the forward translation process is regained by the post-editor, the proximity of meaning to the source text will be preserved as in the case of the evaluation of back translation we have mentioned. Let's examine this situation with an example:

ST-EN: Post-editing is the process of fixing Machine Translation output to bring it closer to human translation standard.

TT-TR (NMT): Düzenleme sonrası, İnsan Çevirisi standardını daha da yakınlaştırmak için Makine Çevirisi çıktısını düzeltme işlemidir.

TT-TR (PBMT): Mesaj düzenleme yakın insan çeviri standardına getirmek için Makine Çevirisi çıkışını tespit işlemidir.

TT-TR (PE): Art düzenleme, Makine Çevirisi çıktısını insan çevirisi standardına daha da yakınlaştırmak için düzeltme işlemidir.

BT-EN (NMT): After editing, it is the process of correcting the Machine Translation output to bring the Human Translation standard closer. (71% semantic overlap with ST)

BT-TT(PE)-EN (NMT): Post-editing is the correction process to bring the Machine Translation output closer to the human translation standard. (83% semantic overlap with ST)

As can be seen from this example, there is an apparent syntactic discrepancy between the translations obtained from Google NMT and Google PBMT. When the semantic similarity between the back translation of the raw output and the source text is calculated, the overlap is found to be 71%. When the semantic similarity of the back translation of the post-edited target text and the source text is calculated, it is seen that the result is at the level of 83%. It would not be wrong to accept the 12% increase of semantic similarity with the source text as a measure (albeit roughly) that also assesses the post-editing effort on the semantic level on the raw translation. This evaluation process is illustrated as a flow in Figure 1.

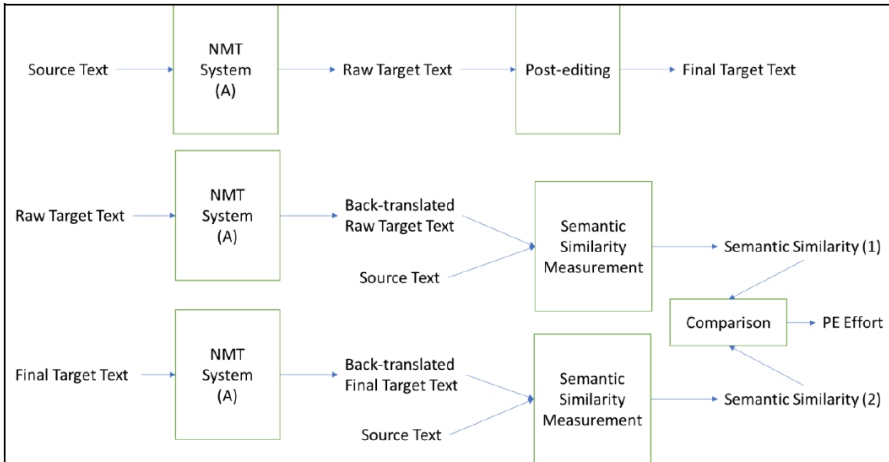


Figure 1. Assessing post-editing effort with a semantic similarity measure using back translations

Conclusion

The need for translation to be produced in a relatively shorter period and the requirement for evaluating this translation have led to the necessity of introducing new and automatic measures for evaluating the accuracy of translation. In addition, in parallel with the transition from PBMT to NMT approach within machine translation systems, the post-editing process and the evaluation methods of post-editing effort evolve. At this point, using the structure of NMT systems

based on semantic equivalence, the approach of evaluating the PE effort with semantic similarity through back translations is emerging as a new and promising method. In this study, the basic approach and the motivation behind this method are mentioned. Detailed statistical testing of the proposed method will be realised in future studies.

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CLIL IN MEDICAL CONTEXT: TEACHING LATIN THROUGH ENGLISH

VERONIKA KELBECEVA

The present topic suggests a model for teaching Latin, based on experience, for medical purposes in higher education at medical universities. The paper emphasizes on several issues however important in teaching a subject through the medium of English in scientific and academic context. The main aspects in constructing a system specialized in teaching content are the methodological resources used in training and practicals. From that point of view the paper gives ideas about improving textbooks, how to represent content and what interactive resources to use that support language learning. One essential thing about teaching in medical context is the practical value of the acquired material and its integration within the general pattern of disciplines, being fundamental for medical professionals. Putting CLIL into practice for medical, dentistry and pharmacology students refers to become aware of methods or models to optimize the teaching process and to concentrate on essential entities in exercising and learning. Creativity is one part of the teaching process for representing the content and it helps to make students understand and memories grammar and rules. But on the other hand placing the textbooks' material and technical language in visual materials, tables, schemes and ideograms improves the understanding ability of students and shortens the distance between native language and an old one like Latin. Another general issue in language teaching is the role of vocabulary and the way it is structured. Linguistic parallels between languages are essential as well in a very basic level because they contextualize concepts and make bridges between derivations, notions and ideas.

TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT): AN EXAMPLE OF A BOOK PRESENTATION

HALA ABD EL-WAHAB

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is nowadays one of the prevailing ways for improving learners' linguistic and communicative competence. Minggu (2013) clarifies that TBLT focuses on two things: Using authentic language and target language in meaningful tasks. Urging teachers to focus on how language works in communicative sense rather than learning about language. Secondly, TBLT is described as a student-centered approach in which there is a shift from the traditional role of the teacher. "Class behavior is owned by the whole group, of which the teacher is but one member" (Kohonen, 1992, as cited in Bailey & Nunan, 1996, p. 53). Moreover, the underlying principle in TBLT is that having learners perform tasks, which will help them to develop knowledge and skills in the second language in accordance with the way their own language learning mechanisms work (Ellis, 2002). The last feature of TBLT is to balance between focusing learners' attention on the form of language together with the meaning without distraction from the task itself. This will help students to develop target language accuracy as well as its fluency.

Prabhu (1987) describes three types of tasks: information-gap, reasoning-gap, and opinion-gap. Information gap activities, involve the transfer of information from one person to another. Opinion gap activities, asking students to convey their personal preferences, feelings or ideas about a particular situation. Reasoning gap activities are asking your students to derive some information from information you give them.

A task, combining all previously mentioned features and types, a class of 10 high intermediate students is used as a pilot study. 10 chapters biography book was chosen, each student was assigned to read one chapter. Each chapter could be understood on its own, at the same time it is part of a chain of events which all form the details of the biography book. Google slides were created for the class. Each student had to summarize his chapter in two slides. Student's choice of the most important points, formulating them into a summary and choosing pictures or videos to represent these ideas creatively provided what Prabhu called "The reasoning gap". After a specific deadline, students had to read all slides of the other students in order to understand all the details of the life story narrated in the biography

book. This part of the task works as “The information gap” activity. Then, under the supervision of the teacher, students discussed with each other difficult ideas or crucial vocabulary and corrected each other’s errors in order to improve their linguistic competence. So, a focus-on-form can result in a meaningful task. When all students’ duties were completed, a Google slide show about the biography book was prepared. Presentation skills and usage of appropriate language were emphasized by the teacher. Students of other classes of the same linguistic level along with the daughter of the book writer were invited to attend a presentation about the book. Each student, in turn, presented his two slides and answered questions from the audience about their understanding of the book. There is no single correct answer to these questions. The third type known as “opinion gap activity” was carried out. This real-life student-centered task lasted for three weeks where reading and summarizing were done outside of class and the other activities were done in-class twice a week for 75 minutes. “This presentation of my father’s book is more vivid than the one presented in the Radio”, the writer’s daughter commented after students’ presentation.

Summing up, TBLT, principal task, is helping students to discover strategies for organizing their knowledge into meaningful hierarchies. Responsibility of learning and teaching shifts from teacher to learners. TBLT implication, learners are provided with a series of tasks which focus learners' attention on the form of language together with the meaning. By the use of information-gap, opinion-gap, reasoning-gap activities, TBLT has changed the trend from what to learn to how to learn.

DECOLONIZING LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: A QUESTION FOR LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

PAULO STELLA

This research in the area of Applied Linguistics views at presenting a decolonizing perspective for language education of language teachers as produced in a languages licensure course at a Federal University in Northeastern Brazil. The concept of Applied Linguistics here is taken as a way to produce science considering inequalities and suffering as inherent to living in such an unfair and problematic neoliberal world (PENNYCOOK, 2010). That said, the research question that moves all the reflection is: how can language teachers be made to escape from the reproduction of old and traditional language teaching methods in their classes in public basic schools? This question has to do with the recurrent problem of students being quite well trained in language skills and teaching methods and educational theories at university, but when they enter the public basic system of education as in-service teachers, they face a hard reality: completely unequipped schools, totally rundown classrooms and shameful low salaries. As a consequence of that lack of infrastructure, in-service teachers resort to the so called traditional teaching methods (e.g.: strictly decontextualized grammar exercises) of which results are disastrous, though. The outcome of that process are low rates in the Basic Education Development Rating (IDEB), a Brazilian statistical measure of educational development. Alagoas, the state of Brazil where this research is produced has one of the lowest educational rates in comparison to other states in the country. To fight this problem, this research relies on three main theoretical points of view: the first one is concerned with the dismantling of colonial structures (GROSFUGUEL, 2007) by adding value to local productions. The second point is the process of self-awareness, meaning that it is not enough to train new language teachers well. It is necessary to make them reflect upon their own conditions, their strengths and weaknesses, and that is only possible by means of a constant interaction process involving various interlocutors (BAKHTIN, 1997), such as other teachers, schoolmates, basic education students, and so on. The other theoretical point of view has to do with knowledge production as it is believed that as language is opaque, it is not possible to produce linear knowledge, that is, knowledge production depends on the interaction of what should be learned with interests, values and experiences of each and everyone that participates in the process (MORIN, 1997). As a result of that, language teachers tend to grow more conscious (FREIRE, 1970) of their responsibilities in changing the status quo as they play a very relevant role in the constitution of their students language production and also their world view.

SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY IN YOUNG ESL WRITERS: A DETAILED ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The aim of this article is twofold: firstly, to explore and identify young ESL writers' syntactic construction in their writing; and secondly, to explicitly describe the linguistic characteristics of writing based on their proficiency levels. The essays of 92 ESL secondary students with advanced and intermediate proficiency levels were analysed. Manual linguistic analysis was conducted on the essays using a coding frame that coded for several syntactic complexity key features at the sentential, clausal and phrasal levels. The findings showed a consistent trend pattern in advanced writers which includes higher frequency of relative clause, finite subordinate clause, prepositional phrases, coordinate phrase and adverbial as sentence opening. Although the inferential statistics suggest a possible development pattern, the detailed analysis of students' essays revealed that syntactic complexity conceptualised and measured solely in terms of the presence of certain syntactic features may not be enough. Results from detailed analysis revealed that certain syntactic features such as minor sentence could not be captured solely by using the syntactic complexity measures used in many previous studies. Furthermore, many of these syntactic features such as relative clause and prepositional phrase were used differently in these essays which affected the complexity and effectiveness of the essays.

Keywords: syntactic complexity; second language writing; linguistic development

1. Introduction

Writing skills are one of the many skills that are essential to academic achievement, employment, and effective communication. Unfortunately, many second language learners are still struggling to master good writing skills, and this problem proves to be serious among Malaysians. Sentence construction is one of the key elements in writing that enables writers to engage with higher-order writing skills such as planning, editing and revising. Thus, the ability to effectively translate ideas may be hindered when writers are lacking mastery in constructing syntactically complex sentences (Graham, 2006). Many previous second language researchers have tried to study second language learners' essays in attempts to eradicate the problems. However, studies that looked at Malaysian students' essays are very much focused on university students, often discussing common errors in their writing (Abdul et al., 2004; Yasruddin et al., 2010; Mukundan, J. & Khojasteh, L., 2011; Mukundan, J. et al., 2013). Although recently, there has been an increase

of interest in syntactic complexity in second language writing, many studies have reported mixed and inconsistent results (cf. Robinson 2007; Skehan 2009; Spada & Tomita 2010). Furthermore, studies in corpus linguistics that looked at syntactic complexity of writing have always reported results solely based on the presence of syntactic features. This paper will argue that syntactic complexity should be systematically explored to reveal how writers with different proficiency levels use these features to shape and alter their sentence in order to effectively deliver their message through writing.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualization of Syntactic Complexity

Research in syntactic complexity has been recognized as one of the key constructs in second language writing, teaching and research (Ortega, 2003), as development in syntactic complexity is a primary part of a second language learner's overall development and attainment in the target language. Despite various studies throughout the years, syntactic complexity is a construct that has been very controversial because of the contradictory results produced. One of the main reasons for this inconsistency is because of the vagueness of metalinguistic definitions, which were often related to various different features or aspects that can be measured (Bulté & Housen, 2012, p. 22).

Bulté and Housen (2012) also explained that in order to measure complexity in a meaningful way, the link between these different levels of construct specification must be as transparent as possible. The multi-level of complexity constructs can be explained further in Figure 2.0.

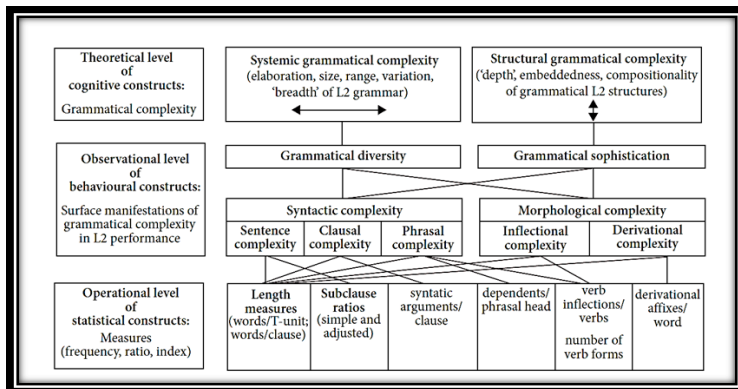


Figure 2.0: Grammatical complexity at different levels of construct specification (Bulté & Housen, 2012)

Based on Bulté and Housen's (2012) taxonomy, grammatical complexity can be measured at several different levels of components and sub-components. It is crucial to derive complexity to its different levels or component so that sounder research findings can be achieved. There are three levels of linguistic complexity: theoretical, observational and operational level. First, linguistic complexity can be investigated at an abstract theoretical level as a property of a (cognitive) system and/or of a structure in terms of its number of components, the degree of embeddedness of

these components, and in terms of the relationships that exist between them. In terms of language performance, a more concrete and observational investigation can be conducted using a sample of actual language use – complexity can be explained in language behaviour at several different levels and in different ways. Lastly, a more concrete and quantitative indication of the degree of complexity of the language sample can be measured at the operational level. At this level, complexity of different samples can be compared and measured more objectively as there is a clear distinction of how each construct differ from one another. In this study, linguistic complexity is investigated in terms of its syntactic structure - sentence, clausal and phrasal complexity of learners' writing.

2.2 Syntactic Complexity and Second Language Proficiency Level

There have been quite a number of studies that look into L2 sentence features in writing, but most studies tend to disregard the relationship between students' proficiency and syntactic measures. As an example, Carter and McCarthy (2006) and Purpura (2013) suggest that the use of subordination in students' writing is viewed to be more complex than coordination. However, these studies did not consider the fact that the correlation between students' writing proficiency and students' syntactic complexity is not necessarily strong. In her paper, Ortega (2003) synthesized 25 other studies that looked into L2 learners' syntactic complexity and overall proficiency in the target language. It was found that across all the 25 studies, the relationship between L2 writing syntactic complexity and L2 proficiency varied depending on "whether a second or a foreign language learning context was investigated and whether proficiency was defined by program level or by holistic rating" (p.492).

Since then, numerous researchers have investigated L2 learners' linguistic features to identify the differences between L2 proficiency levels (e.g. Jarvis et al., 2003; Lu, 2011; Ortega, 2003). However, all these researchers approached L2 learners' linguistic features from different viewpoints in efforts to find valid and reliable indices of L2 learners' writing proficiency by using different measures in characterizing L2 writing proficiency. As an example, Grant and Ginther (2000) used computerized tagging to identify the linguistic features of 92 ESL students' essays at three different level of proficiency. Their study revealed that L2 writer with higher proficiency level tend to use less-frequent words, modals, subordinators, demonstratives, nominalizations, emphatics, diverse verb tense, conjuncts, passive constructions and they produce longer essays. They have also concluded that linguistic features used in the study were related to L2 writing proficiency levels. Much later, Becker (2010) replicated Grant and Ginther (2000) to look at linguistic variables such as grammatical features, lexical and clause-level in 43 L2 learners' essays at three different proficiencies. The study showed that the frequency of the linguistic features in the study increased as the level of students' proficiency level advances, hence verifying Grant and Ginther's (2000) study.

Although there have been numerous studies that investigated the relationship between L2 writing linguistic features and L2 writing proficiency, there are still discrepancies in the linguistic features that distinguish L2 writing proficiency level (Jarvis et al., 2003). Furthermore, the small number of measures used in previous research and limited aspect of linguistic features studied suggest the need to

explore and investigate a larger number of potentially relevant features.

2.3 Syntactic Complexity and Writing Quality

There have also been numerous studies that looked at the relationship between syntactic complexity and writing quality. These studies were conducted based on the notion that syntactic features are key in gauging linguistic development because complex syntactic features often lead to higher ratings of writing quality (Crossley & McNamara, 2014). Results produced by previous studies were inconsistent and none of them included a detailed explanation of this inconsistency. For example, in their study, Crossley and McNamara (2014) looked at the relationship between the indices of syntactic complexity that measures L2 development and human ratings in L2 writing. They reported that essays written with 'a greater number of complex syntactic structures including syntactic structures related to clause complexity ("that" clauses and "to" clauses)' were rated higher (Crossley & McNamara, 2014, p.75). Conversely, Biber (2006) and Biber et al. (2011) claimed that dependent clause is a significant feature of speech instead of academic writing. In another study by Bulté and Housen (2014), the *Language Use* scores used by the raters correlated with most of the syntactic complexity measures investigated in their study. This includes mean length of sentence, mean length of T-unit, mean length of noun phrase, the subclause ratio, the simple sentence ratio, the complex sentence ratio and the compound-complex sentence ratio. Although these measures correlated with overall writing scores, not all were development sensitive. As an example, the complex sentence ratio that were used to measure subordination correlated significantly with the essay quality; however, it did not indicate development. In a review of syntactic complexity studies by Crowhurst (1983), she concluded that the two most commonly used syntactic complexity measures (T-unit length and clause length) do not necessarily have a positive relationship with writing quality. She argued that greater T-unit length can sometimes be associated with faulty writing and that the mode of writing may also affect the relationship between T-unit and quality. Most importantly, Crowhurst (1983) points out that improvements in writing quality should not only be measured using syntactic complexity scores, but other factors surrounding the writers should also be considered. Thus, the notion that the presence of syntactic features determines linguistic development and writing quality should be taken with appropriate caution.

3. Methodology

The research aimed to explore the nature of syntactic structures of secondary education ESL writers and investigate the effects of metalinguistic knowledge on teachers' judgement of writing quality and students' way of writing their essays. In order to achieve this, a mixed method research design which combined qualitative and quantitative approaches in different stages of the research procedure (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008) was adopted. The reason for employing a mixed-method triangulation design is "to obtain different but complimentary data on the same topic" (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p.122) so that a more in-depth understanding of the research problem could be achieved. Results and evidence from previous research were often statistically reported, so this present study used the results derived qualitatively to expand and validate the statistical findings. Quantitative

data consists of students' argumentative and narrative essays whereas qualitative data is drawn from the interviews conducted with the students and teachers. However, this article particularly draws on the statistical and detailed analysis of the advanced and intermediate essays.

3.1 Participants

The advanced and intermediate essays were collected from 120 Malaysian upper-secondary school students, aged 16, from three different schools around Selangor state. Only this group of students were chosen as The Ministry of Education (MoE) and the State Education Office (SEO) have advised not to involve students that are preparing for the Malaysian Certificate of Education examination (SPM), which is a public examination that would determine students' entrance to higher education institutes. The time constraint fixed by the sponsors also allowed very limited number of schools and students to be sampled in the research. Forty students from each school participated in the essay writing sessions. Each class involved in the study consisted of 20 to 25 students that were placed according to their English proficiency level obtained from the previous public examination. Thus, an advanced class and intermediate class were chosen for the writing session.

3.2 Writing Sessions

Two essay prompts were given to the participants, and to make sure even numbers of argumentative and narrative essays, half of the class received argumentative task and another half received narrative task. Participants were required to write at least 350 words for their essays, and they were given an hour to complete the task. The participants and teachers were not informed of the writing topics beforehand to avoid students planning their writing in advance which may affect their essay and eventually affect the findings. However, the topics or prompts given were modelled on those in the 1119 paper of Malaysian Certificate of Education examination as well as other Form four writing textbooks or exercise books. Thus, students and teachers were familiar with the topics. From 120 essays, only complete and comprehensible essays were chosen to be included in the research. This resulted in a total of 92 essays.

Proficiency Level	Essay Genre	
	Argumentative	Narrative
Advanced	23	23
Intermediate	23	23

N = 92

Table 3.0. Essay samples in the study

3.3 Essay Grading

The essays were then graded by the participants' English teachers using the standardized English 1119 marking scheme (the scheme is confidential and could not be included in the article) for Malaysian Certificate of Education or Sijil Pelajaran

Malaysia (SPM). All the teachers were familiar with this rubric because it is used widely by all teachers in Malaysia to mark English essays, especially those of the upper-secondary level students. The reason for the standardized marking rubric is so that all essays were marked based on the same criteria. Each English teacher in the schools had an average of 10 to 15 essays to grade. After four to five days, the graded essays were collected to be analysed linguistically using a coding frame.

3.4 Linguistic Analysis

The coding frame was divided into several main sections – general complexity, clausal complexity, coordination, phrasal complexity and clause patterns – and subsections. Each of these sections consisted specific syntactic measures that have been used in previous L2 syntactic complexity studies. However, these measures were chosen for the present study as each has been tested in previous L2 studies to be suitable in analysing L2 writing specifically (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998; Ortega, 2003; Lu, 2010; Bulté & Housen, 2012).

General Complexity	Clausal Complexity	coordination	Phrasal Complexity	Frequency of Clause Patterns
Mean length of sentence	Mean length of clause	Frequency of Coordinate Clause	Frequency of Adjectival Prepositional Phrase	SV
Clauses per sentence	Frequency of Relative Clause	Frequency of Coordinate Phrase	Frequency of Appositive Noun Phrase	SVO
	Frequency of ING-clause		Frequency of Adverbial Prepositional Phrase	SVC
	Frequency of ED-clause			SVA
	Frequency of TO-clause			SVOC
	Frequency of Finite Subordinate Clause			SVOO
				SVOA
				SVCA
				AVS
				ASVA

Table 3.1. Syntactic complexity measures employed in the present study

Because the researcher decided to hand-code all essays, a second coder was needed in order to show the data is reliable. According to Krippendorff (2004),

such data are reliable when coders are shown to agree on categories assigned to units to an extent determined by the purposes of the study. Thus, when these coders consistently produce similar results, an inference can be made that they somehow have similar understanding of the coding guidelines, and so a consistent performance or results can be expected under this understanding.

Thus, reliability is important for such data as it demonstrates the validity of the coding scheme used to analyse the data. Given the number of essays that needed to be coded, it could be one of the reasons for human error. In this present study, the coding frame used to analyse the essays were first discussed and explained by the researcher to the second coder. The researcher made sure that all discrepancies about the coding frame were cleared before using it for data analysis. Then, to test the coding frame, the researcher and second coder coded ten identical essays and compared their results. All disagreements were discussed until agreement was reached. The coding process for each essay took around 30 – 40 minutes. Once agreement was reached, the researcher and second coder coded another 10 identical essays before comparing the results and discussing any disagreements. After that, the researcher and second coder continued to code the remaining essays and the results were again compared and discussed until an agreement was achieved.

A software was needed to help manage and store the data since each of the essay was manually hand-coded. Each essay was coded using various coloured-pens and highlighters. All the essays were typed and saved as word documents so that they could be replicated for coding purposes. When the coding process was completed, the data was managed and stored in Microsoft Access 2013. This is so that the data, which consists of raw numbers, could be saved and transferred to other programs such as Microsoft Excel and SPSS for statistical analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of this study inform the following research question: What is the nature of syntactic constructions in continuous writing tasks produced by Malaysian upper secondary school students with different L2 proficiency?

The aim of the study is two-fold; to explore and identify the differences in syntactic constructions of writing among secondary education ESL writers and to explicitly describe the linguistic characteristics used by these different writers. The analysis revealed several significant differences in syntactic constructions between advanced and intermediate writers, and the results are divided into several sections: clausal complexity, coordination, phrasal complexity and sentence constructions.

4.1 Clausal Complexity

Mean clause length, three non-finite clauses, relative clause and finite subordinate clause were considered to measure clausal complexity in the students' writing. The data from the analysis showed that there is a pattern of higher clausal complexity in the advanced essays; however, the differences in the mean of relative clause and finite subordinate clause between advanced and intermediate writers were more evident and were statistically significant.

	Proficiency Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Independent T-test P value
Clause Length	Advanced	46	9.13	2.42	0.088
	Intermediate	46	8.41	1.44	
Relative Clause	Advanced	46	4.72	3.17	0.000*
	Intermediate	46	2.02	1.57	
ING-clause	Advanced	46	0.11	0.58	0.150
	Intermediate	46	0.02	0.15	
ED-clause	Advanced	46	0.11	0.48	0.133
	Intermediate	46	0.00	0.00	
TO-clause	Advanced	46	0.65	0.90	0.127
	Intermediate	46	0.39	0.71	
Finite Subordinate Clause (with connective conjunction)	Advanced	46	15.17	4.43	0.047*
	Intermediate	46	13.17	5.06	

Note. *indicates that the difference between these two groups have a statistical significance

Table 1: Clausal complexity of Advanced and Intermediate learners

The consistent trend pattern in advanced writers include longer clauses and higher frequencies of all the subordinate clauses measured. This may suggest possible development pattern, but it is only partially confirmed by the inferential statistics. A detailed analysis of the essays revealed different ways of using relative clause and finite subordinate clause between the two groups. Relative clauses were used in advanced essays to define the noun or simply add more information to the noun as exemplified below:

Example 1: advanced

I sat alone on the doorstep, indulging everyone's excitement. All of them walked into the red and yellow tent which was only a stone's throw away from my house. I can only stare in despair.

Example 2: advanced

I was shocked! The man whom I bumped into last night was there. Everything seemed like a dream to me. Nothing makes sense anymore. Is this the day that will determine my future?

In both examples, relative clauses were used to define and add more information to the nouns. More importantly, both advanced writers demonstrated a good example of effective management of information for concise expression, and this pattern was seen evident across advanced essays. These sentences could be written in a less sophisticated way using full clauses instead of relative clauses. This less complex pattern was found more in intermediate learners' essays, as illustrated below, with the relative clause possibility indicated in brackets:

Example 3: intermediate

He did not notice how she was looking at him. The girl has been sitting across him for two semesters and she is starting to have feelings for him. [The girl, who has been sitting across him for two semesters, is starting to have feelings for him.]_

Example 4: intermediate

While we were sitting, a man came to us and he was wearing the exact same sweatshirt as Adam's [A man came to us, wearing the exact same sweatshirt as Adam's]. I tried so hard not to laugh but Iman's facial expression made it harder!

As shown in the examples above, intermediate writers tend to use full clauses in their writing, which is a common pattern in intermediate essays. The underlined texts could have been written using relative clauses to expand the noun phrase with more compressed expressions. The use of full clause may also result in high frequency of coordinate clause which is a typical feature of weaker writers.

Apart from that, more variations of relative clauses were also found in advanced essays. This means that they were able to use *that*, *which*, *who* and *whom*-clause. There were more of *that*-clause found in intermediate essays, so the use of relative clause by intermediate writers were more limited and less varied.

Example 5: intermediate

The bus that took us there broke down. We did not know what to do, so we called our parents. Unfortunately, Sarah's phone was out of battery and I ran out of phone credit to call anyone.

Example 6: intermediate

It was clear that she did not like the girl that came to the party last night. I saw how she looked at her. Jealousy. Pure jealousy. It was her that seemed to have problems with everyone.

Advanced writers were also able to use both object and subject-extraction relative clauses. Intermediate writers were more confident to use only subject-extraction relative clauses. Some advanced writers were also able to use both types of relative clauses in a single paragraph, as shown in example 8. In a study by Chan (2005), object-extracted relative clause is found to be harder to acquire than subject-extracted relative clause, especially in second language learning. Thus, the use of object-extracted relative clauses in writing may also represent complexity in L2 writing.

Example 7: intermediate

Schools that are ranked higher seem to be parents' choice for sending their

children. This has been a trend among parents in Malaysia and it is creating unnecessary stress to the children.

Example 8: advanced

The hospital room was cold, the atmosphere damp. The patient who the man attacked began to wake. His family gathered around his bed, hopeful. The mother who has been crying has now calmed down.

Although the advanced writer above (example 8) managed to use both types of relative clauses, the repetitive use of noun phrase structure as sentence openings in the first two sentences is rather awkward. This repetition somehow makes the sentences rather choppy and the ideas disconnected. The minor sentence used by an intermediate writer in example 6 is seen more effective in comparison to example 8 as it gives more effect to his or her writing. The differences in using relative clauses and minor sentences between the two groups may signal complexity that could not be captured by the statistical results. This finding is key as it proves that syntactic complexity conceptualised and measured solely in terms of the presence of certain features may not be enough.

Higher frequency of finite subordinate clause was found in advanced essays to connect ideas across a sentence. This is evident in the example below:

Example 9: advanced

Although some students are not interested in scoring their examinations, they are forced to do so to fulfil their parents' expectations. Nowadays, most students are stressful in school because people say that good results will determine one's future but somehow, the reality is that good results do not guarantee success in the future.

The advanced writer above used three finite subordinate clauses confidently to connect ideas across the two sentences. The writer managed to repeatedly use these clauses with no interruption or errors at the start, mid-sentence and at the end of the sentences. This pattern was more evident in advanced essays which also suggests that advanced writers had more confidence and flexibility in shaping their sentences. Furthermore, the pattern of using finite subordinate clause to start a sentence was also evident among advanced writers compared to their counterparts.

4.2 Coordination

In previous research, coordination in students' essays has been indicated as one of the typical features of less advanced technique in sentence complexity. Results from this study showed that, while coordinate clauses were used more by intermediate writers, coordinate phrases were found more in advanced essays. However, only the difference in mean number of coordinate clauses was statistically significant.

	Proficiency Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Independent T-test P value
Coordinate clause	Advanced	46	1.48	1.19	0.000*
	Intermediate	46	4.02	2.69	
Coordinate phrase	Advanced	46	6.37	2.76	0.103
	Intermediate	46	5.41	2.81	

Note. *indicates that the difference between these two groups have a statistical significance

Table 2: Amount of coordination used by Advanced and Intermediate learners

Coordinate clauses were heavily used by intermediate writers to link ideas across sentences, which may also be an attempt to produce longer sentence or create more complex structures in their writing. This trend may also reveal the lack of linguistic confidence in using alternate structures such as the subordinate clause:

Example 10: intermediate

I always accompanied him and I always helped him clean his cave. He was a very great person. He knew about the chaos above the ground, so he wanted to join the Scout Regiment. The Scout Regiment helped destroy the titans and they vowed to bring peace to the world again.

In the example above, the last two sentences could be written as one sentence using a relative clause and non-finite ING-clause to avoid the repetition of 'The Scout Regiment' as well as reducing the clausal coordination as shown below.

I always accompanied him and I always helped him clean his cave. He was a very great person. He knew about the chaos above the ground, so he wanted to join the Scout Regiment, who had helped destroy the titans, vowing to bring peace to the world again.

Advanced learners, on the other hand, elaborated their sentences and created variation to their sentence structures by using coordinate phrase. They tend to use coordinate phrase to create short or minor sentences which is interesting because it draws attention to the nouns. Coordinate phrases were also used to list examples and elaborate phrases and this pattern signals wider vocabulary among advanced learners.

Example 11: advanced

Debts, loans and financial issues. Wedding fees, college fees, thousands of money to be spent but an income so little and a thirsty bank account. What have we become? We were brainwashed to believe that a good examination result is everything. We then work so hard, day and night, forgetting everything and anything, just to get that desirable results.

Example 12: advanced

Ariff admitted that her presence brought light into his life. Since he met her, his mornings and nights were no longer monotonous. Even his mother and sister noticed the big change! Of course Ariff would never forget about Mia, but he was thankful for how Sarah has made him feel happy and loved. He knew he was lucky to be destined with this amazing and incredible girl.

4.3 Phrasal Complexity

Phrasal complexity was considered in this study because phrases are not only elaborating, but they are also condensed and compressed. This means that phrasal modifiers are substitutes to sentences that use clausal modifiers for elaboration. It was evident that advanced writers demonstrated a consistent trend pattern of higher phrasal complexity compared to intermediate writers. The differences in the mean of adverbial prepositional phrase and adjectival prepositional phrase were statistically significant between the two groups. Advanced learners showed more confidence in using multiple adjectival and adverbial prepositional phrases in their writing to present their ideas more vividly. The use of these phrases among intermediate writers was more limited. Although these prepositional phrases were present in intermediate essays, the structures were more basic and simpler with less details. The difference in using adjectival and adverbial prepositional phrases between the two groups is demonstrated in example 14 and 15:

Example 14: advanced

I made my way to the rooftop of the building and the sight of the helicopter somehow calmed my anxious mind. Immediately, we took off to the place of the incident. It was not long before I saw a cloud of black smoke hovering over the enormous building. My heart began to pound but I reminded myself that I needed to get myself together. The captain's voice buzzed from the walkie-talkie, giving me instructions to save any victims trapped in the building. "This is it!" I thought to myself.

Example 15: intermediate

It is the first day of school and nothing changed. She was still the girl she had been before. The idea of having cool new friends suddenly disappeared. She walked into the hall with a heavy heart and saw Erica, who used to be her best friend, sitting on the bench and having a conversation. She walked pass them and overheard their conversation. She almost stumbled but she maintained her cool and just walked.

4.4 Sentence Constructions of Advanced and Intermediate Writers

The present study also looked at the patterns in sentence constructions among advanced and intermediate writers. Overall, both group of writers used either a subject or an adverbial to begin their clauses or sentences. Both writers used more *subject + verb* constructions in their writing, but this is expected as *subject + verb* sentence pattern is common in English. The results showed that there were statistically significant differences in using *subject + verb + object*, *subject + verb + object + object* and *subject +verb +object + adverbial* structures between the

two groups. The analysis also revealed that there were more advanced writers who used adverbials as sentence openings, especially with the *adverbials + verb + subject* and *adverbials + subject + verb* structures as there were statistically significant differences in the mean number of these structures between advanced and intermediate writers. This may indicate that the advanced writers were more confident and flexible in shaping their sentences by using more non-standard sentence structures in their essays.

	Proficiency Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Independent T-test P value
SV	Advanced	46	0.52	1.03	0.077
	Intermediate	46	0.22	0.51	
SVO	Advanced	46	4.61	1.60	0.001*
	Intermediate	46	6.13	2.46	
SVC	Advanced	46	5.91	2.06	0.764
	Intermediate	46	5.76	2.74	
SVA	Advanced	46	6.02	1.42	0.069
	Intermediate	46	6.61	1.62	
SVOC	Advanced	46	3.91	1.64	0.192
	Intermediate	46	4.41	1.98	
SVOO	Advanced	46	3.07	1.50	0.000*
	Intermediate	46	4.87	2.36	
SVOA	Advanced	46	5.30	2.04	0.001*
	Intermediate	46	3.93	1.87	
SVCA	Advanced	46	2.96	1.25	0.516
	Intermediate	46	3.13	1.31	
AVS	Advanced	46	0.52	0.84	0.015*
	Intermediate	46	0.17	0.44	
ASVA	Advanced	46	1.98	1.47	0.084
	Intermediate	46	1.32	1.06	
ASV	Advanced	46	1.47	1.70	0.048*
	Intermediate	46	0.80	0.65	
ASVO	Advanced	46	2.31	1.04	0.104
	Intermediate	46	1.81	1.37	

Note. *indicates that the difference between these two groups have a statistical significance

Table 4: Syntactic constructions of Advanced and Intermediate learners

Advanced

- i. *With determination, students continue pursuing their dreams.*
- ii. *Under the moon stood the most perfect girl.*
- iii. *Behind him, the hunter followed cautiously.*

- iv. *Frightened by the threat posed to her, she decided to disappear.*

Intermediate

- v. *Firstly, parents are to blame for this problem.*
 vi. *However, a lot of students do not agree with this statement.*
 vii. *Suddenly, the door opened!*
 viii. *Immediately, she chased her best friend.*

Adverbials were used as sentence openings in both advanced and intermediate essays. However, both group of writers used adverbials differently to begin their sentences. As shown in the examples above, advanced writers were able to use more complex structures of adverbials whereas intermediate writers tend to use linking adverbials or adverbs as sentence openings. The pattern of using adverbial phrases or clauses as sentence opening was common in advanced essays but not in intermediate essays. Furthermore, subject-verb inversions such as in example ii were also found in advanced essays even though they were infrequent.

	Proficiency Level	N	Frequency	Mean
Subject-verb sentence patterns	Advanced	46	1486	32.30
	Intermediate	46	1613	35.06
Adverbials as sentence openings	Advanced	46	289	6.28
	Intermediate	46	189	4.10

Table 5: Sentence Patterns Variation of Advanced and Intermediate learners

When the total mean of all the sentence patterns were calculated, there was an evident difference in using adverbials as sentence openings between advanced and intermediate writers. This difference may suggest that intermediate writers were more confident in using the common subject-verb structures in their writing whereas advanced writers had more syntactical variety in their writing.

5.0. Conclusions and Implications

The development pattern of syntactic complexity is shown in the analysis of this study by the significant increase in length and frequency of linguistic features at each level of syntactic structure – phrase, clause and sentence – which also supports the findings in previous studies on ESL and EFL syntactic complexity (e.g. Bulté & Housen, 2014; Lu, 2011; Yang et al., 2011). Although the inferential statistics suggest a possible development pattern, syntactic complexity of writing should not be determined solely on the presence of syntactical features. Unlike previous studies, the detailed analysis of students' essays in this present research revealed how different writers used these features to shape and alter their sentence in order to effectively deliver their message through writing. This means that it is also possible for a writer with lower syntactic complexity score to write a more effective essay compared to an essay written by a writer with higher syntactic complexity score. The detailed analysis also explored and described the linguistic characteristics of writing in advanced and intermediate writers. This provided

explanation to the connections between syntactic patterns used by different writers and the effectiveness of their writing.

Through the detailed analysis, advanced writers were more confident in using these syntactic features to create several rhetorical effects in their writing which include amusing, shocking, persuading or prodding the readers. This trend may be considered as a marker for more able writers because it involves the writer to make conscious decisions of using certain features in order to write more effectively. Intermediate writers were found to use more compound sentences chained by coordinate conjunctions – dominated by 'and', 'but' and 'so' – revealed how they were very focused on delivering the content without considering the rhetorical effect that could be achieved by employing these more complex syntactical features. Most importantly, the higher use of adverbial as sentence opening also showed that advanced writers were able to manipulate their sentence structures to create different effects in their writing by using short or minor sentences. They were also more confident to use adverbials to begin their sentences to place focus on different ideas in order to communicate their message more effectively.

However, syntactic complexity determined solely by the scores of length or frequencies should be carefully considered (Crowhurst, 1983). This is because syntactic complexity measures or indices may only capture the presence of the linguistic features and not how they were used by writers to shape their writing. Thus, higher syntactic complexity scores do not always mean that the essay is good and effective as greater length or frequencies could also lead to faulty writing (Crowhurst, 1983). As an example, this study revealed that adverbials were used by both group of writers, but intermediate writers started their sentences with mostly linking adverbs which were also overly used in some essays. While linking adverbs help in coherence, overly using them may result in a problematic essay because repetitive linking adverbs may draw more attention to the intersection between ideas instead of the key message. Similarly, the use of minor sentences also suggests that syntactic complexity is not only about the presence of more complex sentences. The use of short sentences such as example 6 written by an intermediate writer added effect to the writing by drawing readers' attention to the word 'jealousy'. Whereas, the use of short sentences in example 8 by an advanced writer were rather awkward and made the ideas disconnected. Thus, the ability of writers to effectively use short sentences for effect should also be considered as key marker of development because 'increased writing ability involves the successful deployment of these linguistic resources in the service of specific writing goals' (Yang et al., 2015, pg. 56). The detailed analysis also showed that diversity and variations of linguistic features may contribute to higher complexity and quality of the writing, a notion suggested in the studies of Berman (2008), Myhill (2008), Myhill (2009) and Yang et al. (2015).

Pedagogically, the findings of this study may help teachers to determine linguistic features that may need more emphasis especially when teaching writing to writers with different proficiency levels and writing ability. Although the findings revealed possible development pattern between two groups of writers, teachers might also benefit from the variation of students' linguistic choice revealed from the detailed analysis so that teachers will have a better understanding on how to facilitate different writers with different level of ability and proficiency. The notion

of syntactic complexity equals to greater length and frequency should also be treated more cautiously because 'the real power of looking at syntactical patterns in sentences is in making connections for the learner between what a text means and how it achieves that meaning' (Myhill, 2008, pp.287). Without either one, the communicative process of writing might be interrupted.

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ADDRESSING LINGUISTIC FEATURES IN CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION

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Over the last decades, authentic learning has been seen as a facilitator of the acquisition of knowledge that is used in real world practice. As a pedagogical approach, authentic learning allows students to encounter the same challenges in the classroom as they do in the real world. It aims to equip student with the problem solving skills that are essential for real world practice. Research has proved that learning by doing, through experience, is much better than learning by listening or observing. Instructional models that focus on the implementation of realistic learning tasks were highly recommended since researches attested the importance of engaging students in their learning. (Herrington J., Reeves T.C., Oliver R., 2014, and Steventon, 2016.) Liney, W. (2016) argues that languages are not learned through direct instruction, but rather acquired “naturally” or automatically.

Content-based instruction (CBI) allows language to naturally function as a tool for communication. It provides second-language learners with instruction in content and language. CBI is a significant approach which makes the acquisition of a target language takes place within the context of meaningful and authentic language presented through specified content matter. In CBI, learners are engaged in authentic language-dependent activities while examining authentic aural or written texts of interest to them that are primarily prepared for native speakers of the target language. (Liney, W. 2016.)

The role of language teachers in such settings is to address the linguistic features that learners need in order for the target language learning to take place and be the main outcome of the instruction. Linguistic features include phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics.

This presentation is concerned with how to address such linguistic features. In other words, it tackles one of the great challenges that face Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) teachers, namely, choosing the language features that should be highlighted: when should they be put in focus, and how they should be addressed? Moreover, some examples are provided to be shared with the audiences of how to address some linguistic features that are dictated by content materials.

The presentation recommends that attention to linguistic features within the area of content being studied is necessary if AFL or ASL learners are to acquire the cognitive language proficiency equivalent to the level of their counterpart native speaker. Content-based instruction offers many meaningful contexts within which learners can develop linguistic competence since it focuses on the use of language to exchange thoughts and ideas. It also emphasizes that the teacher is fully responsible to identify relevant linguistic features to complement the content that is being presented in or outside the classroom.

LANGUAGE VARIETIES: A LINGUISTIC DILEMMA IN ARABIC AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

MONA HASSAN

Foreign language (FL) teachers face many challenges, mainly, "students' characteristics" such as students' attitude and behavior, students' different cultural background, the learning environment, the teaching materials, the teaching strategies, etc. (Ilhan, 2017:67). In addition to these challenges, teachers of Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) pose a great challenge reflected in the nature of Arabic as a diglossic language. The linguistic situation in different Arab countries necessitates the coexistence of two varieties, a high variety (H) and a low variety (L). The high variety, referred to as modern standard Arabic (MSA), is used in speaking in formal situations and writing, while the low variety, referred to as colloquial Arabic, is the one used for speaking in everyday's life (Ferguson 1959, Badawi 1973, and Wahba 1996). The problem exacerbates when students, in their AFL listening and speaking classes, are exposed to various talk shows from different Arabic satellite channels. In each of these talk shows, guest speakers from different Arab countries are invited and engaged in the discussions of controversial political, social, and cultural issues. Through the interaction among the guest speakers, different linguistic features are employed to communicate the speakers' intended messages. Among these features are the interweaving of MSA and different Arabic dialects with their different syntax, morphology and lexicon, the use of slang, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, etc. The choice of this type of authentic listening and speaking material supports Silvia (2016:156) who recommended that "what the teachers should do is to expose the learners to as many situations and scenarios as they may encounter in real-life interactions and develop their intercultural adaptation and communication strategies".

Accordingly, the current study addresses one of the challenges facing AFL teachers and students which is comprehending and dealing with this type of authentic listening and speaking material. From my experience in teaching AFL, I support Grginovic (2014:7) who stated that "linguistic competences are one of such components that constitute FL teacher knowledge base. They are equally important and closely interrelated with every other component of FL teacher knowledge". Thus, my aim in this study is to provide AFL teachers with an analysis of the spoken discourse of the Arab guest speakers as performed in a number of the tackled talk shows (around thirty talk shows, each lasts for almost one hour). Data is analyzed through a frequency distribution of the different linguistic features (whenever occurred in the collected data) in relation to the similarities and differences that characterize such linguistic features.

Finally, I believe that integrating the analysis of the present study in the AFL listening and speaking curriculum would not only help AFL teachers gain a better understanding of the various linguistic features which characterize the spoken discourse of Arab speakers, but would also enable them to facilitate the learning process for their students of such features.